NEIGHBOR

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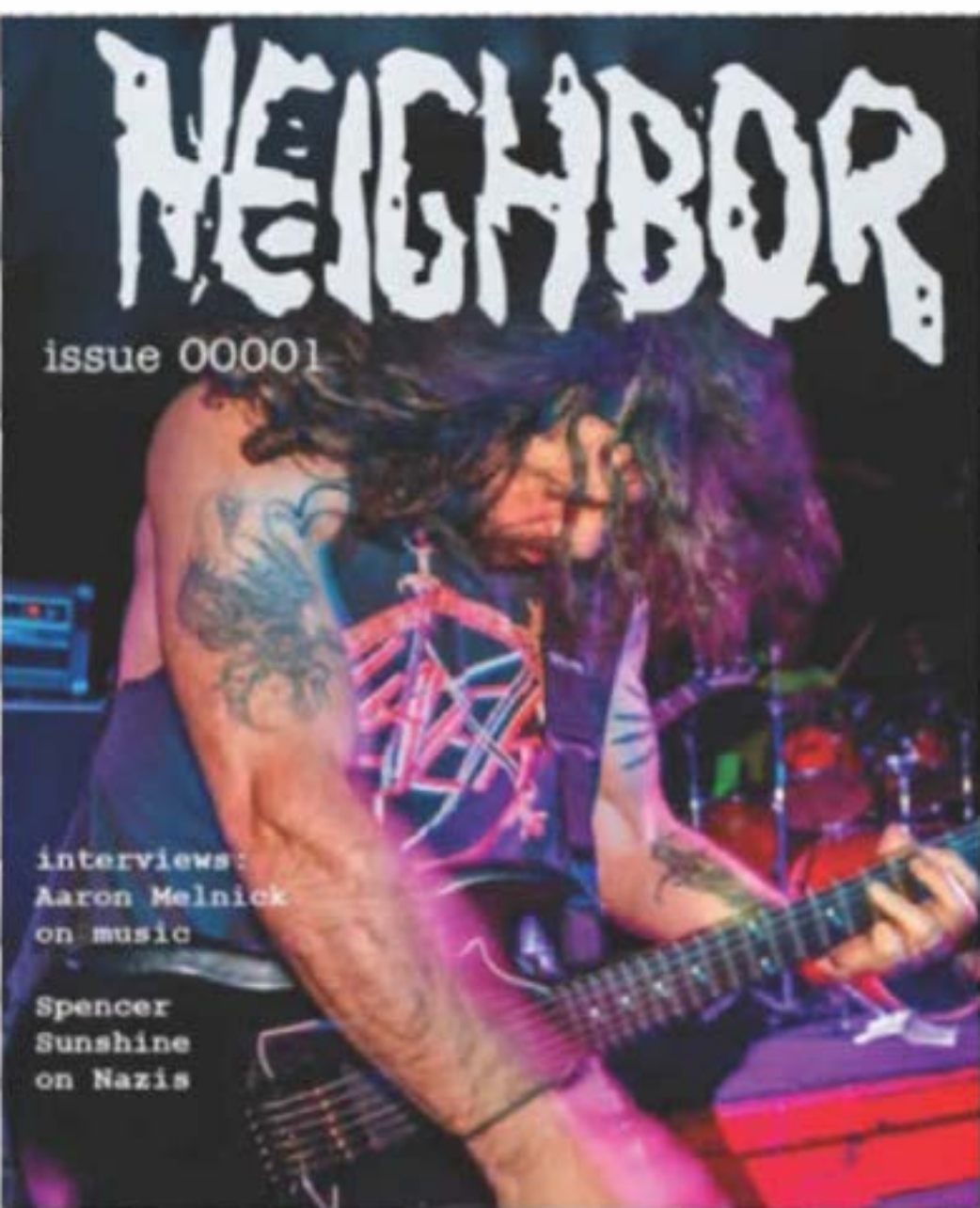

interviews:
Aaron Melnick
on music

Spencer
Sunshine
on Nazis

NEIGHBOR ZINE

THE FIGHTING ZINE

ISSUE #00001

My first zine was *No Exit*, which I did with Alejandro de Acosta in 1990. It featured the first ever interview with Dwid and Aaron, conducted in a Cleveland Heights 76 gas station, about their new band, INTEGRITY.

I've been returning to zines every ten years or so since then. Sorry for the delay. NEIGHBOR, as a title, is an in-joke. Where some people only saw me as the Melnicks neighbor despite all else.

My goal with NEIGHBOR is to include authors, artists, and musicians from the Cleveland Hardcore scene. As well as interviews exploring the existential threat cop culture, alt-right nutsees, and other white christian nationalists pose to underground and alternative scenes. We live in stupid times.

In this issue: The Aaron Melnick interview I did in 2024 for *Razorcake*. I don't feel it got enough attention, plus NUCLAE is on the verge of releasing new music. And Aaron spent the summer playing with INTEGRITY, INMATES, and FINAL AGONY. Maybe you saw a show? Lemme know.

Spencer Sunshine is the author of a book, Neo-Nazi Terrorism and Countercultural Fascism: The Origins and Afterlife of James Mason's Siege, about the neo-Nazis in the *Abraxas Foundation* centered around Boyd Rice and Charles Manson. It was a big problem, then, and remains a huge problem today. I interviewed him in 2025. Additionally, I've included a short piece by Sunshine called, "Charles Manson and the New Left."

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Editorial No. 1 : OLD MAN COMPLAINTS

I get hit a lot. Still. Even though I quit drinking at the turn of the century, I still get hit. A lot. Never by fists, at least not ones intentionally aimed at me anymore. Rather I get hit by things thrown or launched or otherwise spun into the air.

Here are three incidents in a much longer list of direct hits:

1. I was standing near a metal support beam at a basement show in Kent. This was years ago. When a beer bottle exploded next to my face. I saw it coming. Just like a drawing of an anarchist launched Molotov Cocktail it soared right at me. I moved my head, just enough, that it missed me but still hit the pole. How I was not injured by that burst of glass I do not question. Especially, with the littlest effort I put into self-preservation.

2. I was standing near the merch table during an INMATES show. Paul threw a full can of beer. He arched it over the heads of most of the crowd, but with perfect precision to thud into the front of my shoulder. Dead eye dick with his random aim. Again, I saw it spiral toward me in slow motion and was able to twist enough away that it didn't hit my chest or chin. I threw it back and missed Paul but hit some tall kid in the back instead. Aside from being covered in cheap beer, I was slightly bruised near my armpit.

3. Most recently, at the Grog Shop, I stood in the little alcove of benches, jealously marveling at the windmill kick acrobatics that some young man learned in his GYMBOREE class, when I felt a soft punch in the middle of my chest. I looked around for someone who could throw such a friendly punch, but instead discovered a NIKE AIR SOMEGUY shoe in front of me. I picked it up. A curly haired muppet popped out of the crowd to claim it. Later he came up to me and apologized. In response, I did the most embarrassing thing I could have done. I looked him dead in the eyes and scolded, "If you're going to dance around like that, tie your fucking shoe laces."

So in summation, if you see me at a show, please don't throw your beer at me. Drink it instead.

Aaron Melnick is a frustrating person to know, because he is always moving forward - always pushing himself into new projects; always teaching himself something with a passion and commitment that few in Cleveland have innately. Cleveland punk and hardcore is made by cheap matches thrown on dry kindling. Sure, there is a spectacularly bright explosion of intense fire, but it burns itself up and out too quickly. The stakes are low, so the drama is high as Cleveland eats its own. But Aaron fits into a lineage of caretakers. He supports, encourages, and lends a hand more than others rip at the seams. With each new interest, new band, and project Aaron tackles them with authentic sincerity. His newest project, Nuclae, supports a band and a novel, his first, to complete a multi-decade project inspired by a late night conversation. Now that it is out, what comes next? Luckily, we will all get to enjoy whatever comes next.

AARON MELNICK

JOHN PICHE: A Double. How did you get into punk as a young kid?
AARON MELNICK: Well, lemme think. I mean, you were there for a lot of it. Well, I moved to England with my family in 1982, 1983. I did sixth grade there. Every Sunday night, we would watch Top of the Pops and back then they would have Siouxsie and the Banshees and Bauhaus and stuff like that. So I got exposed to some different sorts of music. When we moved back to Cleveland, I discovered college radio. College Radio in Cleveland (Stations like WRUW and WCSB) is really amazing because every show is different. I gravitated more toward post-Punk at first and some hardcore, I remember the first time I heard Joy Division on one WRUW, and it blew my mind. They played “Heart and Soul” and “New Dawn Fades,” I was just blown away at the power of the emotion.
JOHN: I just remember that orange dictation cassette player used to carry around.
AARON: Yeah, I painted it orange.
JOHN: All you played on it was Tears for Fears and that it was annoying, like you had a personal soundtrack.
AARON: Yeah. (laughs)
JOHN: The moodier stuff seemed to really draw you in. What do you think drew you to that initially versus the poppier English bands? You know what I mean? That moodier, sadder, depressive music was the entry drug, right?

AARON: Yeah. I don't know. I think when I moved back from England, it was a weird time because I gravitated toward looking a little different, maybe not punk, but I bleached my hair and wore some weird clothes, ripped up jeans and stuff. The way I dressed was license for people to fuck with me for sure. When I moved back, I liked this weird music and that was the most important thing to me. So I felt a little ostracized from old friends. And then to compound that I went even deeper. Tears for Fears - What did you call them? The gateway drug? Is that what you said?
JOHN: Yeah.
AARON: Tears for Fears is the gateway drug for Joy Division. (laughs) Especially, *The Hurting*, you know what I mean? (laughs)

John: *The Hurting* is an amazing album, but it's unrelentingly depressing every song.
Aaron: There's some higher points in it, but most of the big songs are pretty down. But yes, it's dark, it's dark, for sure. I liked that. I mean you can see going from that to Joy Division to metal. Joy Division are a metal band in a way, I might get skewered for saying that. (laughs) But that mix of New Wave and Metal - the guitar, it's very simple, it's like Sabbath. Anyway, once I found college radio, I started hearing about shows. My first hardcore show was a Toxic Reasons and Government Issue, and that was really cool. I was fourteen or fifteen.
JOHN: By dressing a certain way and listening to a certain type of music, it was a key that unlocked a group of people, a scene. And I wonder what that scene was when you first entered it and then how it developed over time. You know what I mean?
AARON: Yeah, so at first it was pretty local. I grew up in Cleveland Heights, which is on the east side of Cleveland. And there was this place called Coventry which on Friday nights you could see a hundred punk people hanging out, maybe more sometimes honestly. It was this mixture of old hippies, punks and alternative kids, whatever you want to say. Back then the labels weren't as clearly defined. We were all just into this counterculture. So I got to meet a lot of people at Coventry. I want to say, if we just step back a second, Anya (Aaron's older sister) dated this guy Dave Araca (The Guns, False Hope, Integrity), about the same time I started going to shows and listening to college radio. I think I was probably fourteen, I don't remember the exact year.
JOHN: He was still in The Guns. They were still playing out.
AARON: Yeah, he was still in The Guns, who are one of the greatest hardcore bands from Cleveland or anywhere else. They never got the credit because they stayed local. They never played anywhere else (outside of Ohio). They started when they were twelve and thirteen years old. I think when they played their first show, they had to sneak into the club to play. (laughs) So in my opinion, they were national talent level, hardcore. I mean, the song "I'm Not Right" is one of the best hardcore songs ever written in my opinion. Anyway, Dave introduced me to different kinds of music. He gave me a *Hell Awaits* cassette and that blew my mind. He turned me on to a lot of music for sure. Although I did hear Peace Corpse's "Quincy's Lament" on the radio, that was the first hardcore song I ever heard.
JOHN: I remember I was outside watering the front lawn or something, and he was driving by, I think he was going to pick your sister up, and he pulled into my driveway and I just knew him from hanging out with you guys. Anyway, he pulls in, he goes, "John, get in my car." And I got in and he was like, listen to this. And he played me Rich Kids On LSD.
AARON: Shit. (laughs)
JOHN: And I was just like, "Holy God, what is this?" He's like, "I'll make you a tape. Alright, I got to go." And then kicked me out of his car. He was one of those guys that was constantly exploring and

sharing and passing the message on. I was just standing in my front yard and he pulls in and he was like, "Hey kid, you want to hear some crazy shit?" (laughs)
AARON: Yeah, I mean, it's pretty awesome to be like that. I think I try to be like that. Really, everyone does that to a certain extent.
JOHN: I remember in high school we would jam, right? People would just drag their amps over and play in the basements after school. How do you think that formed your musical journey?
AARON: Well, first of all, it allowed me to see that anyone can make music regardless of talent level. Especially when first starting out, I think it matters less how good you are at your instrument and more how much emotion you could put in your instrument. Seeing all this different stuff happening, all these different bands and different styles of music - there was quite an amalgamation of styles. Especially in early hardcore, every band had their own style. Everything sounded crazy. You know what I mean? I liked that each band had a personality and even locally each band was different. So we were in a scene under False Hope. They kind of led the scene, but then there was Confront and Outface and Hyper As Hell, Domestic Crisis, all these bands had their own vibe and their own sound. It was totally different. And then when your favorite band, Ugly But Proud would come to town, I loved that they didn't sound like everybody else either. It was a really cool time. I just felt like my purpose was to make music.

JOHN: I'm going to jump ahead to skipping over Common Sense - Die Hard - Integrity progression. I want to focus on the Integrity piece of it all. I've always been interested in this: you were in one of the most infamous bands, known for some fabled, legendary drama thirty years ago. Some of it happened, some of it didn't. (both laugh) But you managed to stay removed from all that drama and everyone was always fairly cool with you. And even when people would show up to fight, they would say to you, "I don't have any problem with you. I'm here to fight him."
AARON: Oh, yeah. (laughs)
JOHN: But what was it really like being in Integrity? Really like living in Integrity and dealing with that drama and your shows always had the potential of violence against the band. It took the violence out of the pit and put it on the band itself.
AARON: Well, the pit was pretty violent too, I think. I don't know. I mean, I was kind of embroiled in it a little bit. It was kind of exciting, as a kid, honestly, to be part of it. But at the same time, I'm not someone who's going to...how do I say this? I like being cool with people, and as long as I think they're cool, I'm going to be cool with them. I think we have more in common than we don't have in common. So this is an interesting question to answer because yes, it's true that, Integrity started off kind of as a straight edge band and then quickly morphed into kind of a nihilistic, drugged out, band. (laughing) That caused some problems, know what I mean?
JOHN: There were a lot of drugs...(laughing)
AARON: Almost like the movie *Altered States* or something, we went through our phases, obviously, but I don't know, definitely crazy things happened.
JOHN: How did you feel about the band having that reputation, being a part of that energy? You were writing this amazing music, arguably changing hardcore and instead, this reputation forms around the drama - are they straight edge? Aren't they straight edge? Are they tough guys, etc.
AARON: We were pretty crazy. (laughing)

JOHN: It must've been exhausting to live in a world where you couldn't just play the music, yet at the same time you were benefiting from the infamy.
AARON: Yeah, I don't know. I think that's what makes Integrity - (empathizes) *Integrity*. Especially early, Nineties Integrity. It's both of those things. Yes, for me it was more always about the music and I just wanted to play songs that I wrote that I loved playing. But there was an excitement value from that other stuff. Let's admit it, when you go to a hardcore show, its exciting because it's dangerous. Even if you're in a scene where there's no drama happening and you have no beef with anybody - there's still this potential. If you're near the pit, it can be scary. To get back to the original point, that didn't bother me at the time. Maybe later on it did. Toward the end of my time in Integrity, I was starting to tire of it maybe. I was getting a little older and didn't really care about the excitement as much. There were other reasons that it was over for me, too. At first though, I didn't really mind too much. Sometimes it'd be a little excessive and I'd be like, "Oh my God, this is ridiculous." But a lot of times it was like, "Wow, that's pretty crazy." I know maybe I didn't have much of a sense...I don't know what the right word is, but I feel like there was a time in my life it was every man for himself. That was my attitude. It was kind of cold, I have to say. Honestly, I'm not saying that I'm proud of that, but also, it's just the reality of how it was for me. And you could probably hear that in the music, too.

JOHN: You definitely went through a period of being a scrawny goth kid. What did they call you? Bleach Boy?
AARON: Did they call me that? I don't remember. Did you just make that up, right now, to crack?
JOHN: No. I'm going to ask your mom. I think someone did call you "Bleach Boy." (both laughing) When did you start getting into fitness and working out? Was Rollins the main inspiration?
AARON: I don't know, really. I mean, there were definitely these muscular, tough guys around. I thought they looked tough, so I assumed they could fight. People don't fuck with them, I thought. Bands like Cro-Mags looked like hard asses, some of them anyway, Rollins, Suicidal, some of that macho looking stuff…but I think because I was a scrawny shorter guy, I probably weighed one hundred and twenty pounds when I was a freshman in high school, and people would fuck with me. I was like, okay, well, I want to change this. So I started lifting weights. I started taking kung fu. It was a self-protection thing, honestly, to tell you the truth. It's kind of a metamorphosis a bit too. It made me feel good about myself. Working out and staying in shape became a lifelong thing for me. I still work out to this day. Plus back then, you definitely would get static and just being that age, I think you're going to get static no matter what your social group is, but also if you look a little crazier, people are going to gravitate towards fucking with you. I remember there were shows at Knights of Columbus Hall, and this was in Mayfield Heights, where there was a lot of jockish, machismo type stuff. And jocks or whatever would drive by and yell slurs at us. It was constant. People would heckle, yell the stupidest shit and threaten to fight you, you remember? Now people are more accepting of the diversity, I feel like. Which is good.
JOHN: Yeah, it's good. I want to talk about the Cleveland scene you came up in because Integrity joined a solid scene with other bands Outface, False Hope...
AARON: They were kind of like the generation directly preceding us. We were part of that scene, but Integrity was the next wave, we were the new thing. You know what I mean?
JOHN: How do you think that scene helped the band or hurt the band? What was your interaction with those other bands like Domestic Crisis or Eddie Munster Head?
AARON: Yeah, especially early on, we started a little later than most of those bands. We were in that generation, in terms of being the same age and stuff. Everyone started bands when they were 16, and my bands maybe didn't get as much traction until Integrity. I mean, everyone loved False Hope. They were

heavy, they were exciting to watch. Definitely they were into it. They had a scene of probably thirty or forty people. They became bigger toward the end of their career, but they were definitely an example of professionalism to strive towards Outface as well. Outface were extremely tight, and they set the bar very high in terms of their performance. And they were just good. They were good players. And Confront was cool because they kind of came out of left field. They were straight edge and they were just more simple, hardcore, a bit of a throwback. There were other good bands, but those were the big three for the kids on the east side. That False Hope scene. So yeah, that definitely influenced me in terms of how to attain a level of professionalism, what works and what doesn't work, things like that.

JOHN: You once mentioned to me that Chris Smith (False Hope, Keelhaul, Integrity, Inmates) taught you what it means to be in a band.

AARON: Yeah. Chris, he was someone I looked up to. I still kind of look up to, well, I have to look up to him since he's really tall. (laughing) But especially back then when I was younger he was kind of an older brother figure. Plus I would say he was the leader of False Hope, or at least as much as a band can have a leader. I don't know. I mean, he was the force that drove it forward. And usually a lot of times the song writer will be that force because they have a vision, and then the rest of the members, you count on them to help realize that vision. And then not only that, also, there's a level of professionalism. You don't want to just accept the first take that you do in the studio. Just accept anything. There haven't been too many shows in my life where I've been like, "Wow, we fucked up. That sucked." And the reason is because I'm not usually willing to go out there with people that I don't feel can do it. I mean, that matters. That matters. The amount of practice you do, stuff like that, that's important. I like to have a lot of practice. What else? There's so many aspects to being in a band. When I was in Integrity, I didn't maybe see all the aspects because Dwid did a lot of it, but I feel like me and Dwid had complimentary skills - I would write music, he would write lyrics. I would do stuff like rent the vans and do a lot of the driving but he would book the shows. You know what I mean? Of course there's other people doing stuff. I'm not trying to take away from anybody else. But I mean, if everyone is driven to create and make something, I think that's what makes for a successful band. And later on, Chris Smith joined for a couple of years, and that was really cool to get him into Integrity. I forget if he's the right or left speaker on *Those Who Fear Tomorrow*, but his rhythm guitar is really amazing. Whatever the speaker, it's the louder guitar. And he was playing out of a Marshall. And I think that lends a lot of the flavor of *Those Who Fear Tomorrow*. Lenny's obviously heavily featured in that record...

JOHN: Best bass player since Lemmy.

AARON: Yes. (laughs)

JOHN: Right. Integrity went from basically being a sticker band to having a seven inch in a very short period of time.

AARON: Well yeah, I'd been in this band Die Hard, and Dwid was the singer, and then Dwid wasn't the singer, and this dude, Stork (brother of Paul Shlachter of Inmates, Noncommercial Records, Brainwashed Youth,

Meanstreak) was the singer. I played bass in Die Hard. I played bass because that's what they would let me play. But I really wanted to play guitar. I love guitar and I still love guitar, but I really loved guitar back then. I really wanted to play guitar in a band. So me and Tom Brose from Confront started writing songs in my basement. We would lift weights and we'd be tough, and then we'd say "let's write a tough song." (laughs) We wrote those first three songs which became the Integrity *Demo* - “Bringing It Back,” “Live It Down,” and “Dead Wrong.” Those were the three tough songs we wrote together. (laughs) Dwid was looking for a band. It's strange how it happened because Tony Pines was the drummer in Die Hard, and we were basically like, "Tony, will play drums for us?" We didn't know anyone else who wanted to play drums for us. (laughing) So he played on the demo. I think those three songs were recorded at the end of the Die Hard recording session at Mars. So that's how the first three Integrity songs were recorded at Mars Recording Studios. Mars recorded all the stuff that I ever did back then with Integrity. And Bill Korecky (owner of Mars) did the second False Hope demo. Bill did some really, really great stuff. He did the Confront, he did False Hope. He did Outface.

JOHN: He did everybody in Cleveland, essentially.

AARON: He recorded everyone in Cleveland. Yeah. We recorded it in just one day. We just laid 'em down real quick. I doubled the guitars. I put a couple dive bombs on there. (laughing) I think I played a solo in “Dead Wrong.” It's the only solo. I think there's a solo in there. I haven't listened to that song in so long, I don't remember, but it sounded really cool. (laughs) Chris Smith heard that demo and said he enjoyed it and thought it was really good. That made me proud and that made me happy. Somehow Tony Brummel (Victory Records) got a hold of the demo. I'm not sure how he got ahold of it, but he sent us a letter. I remember getting the letter and it said he wanted to put out a seven inch with us. So we went back to Mars and recorded that seven inch.

That was the difference, people tended to take you more seriously if you had vinyl out. So that's how that Integrity seven inch came about.

JOHN: You definitely made a mark, obviously, and it's a great seven inch, and I don't want to get into all that Victory drama. I want to talk about today. When I listen to hardcore bands especially, and sometimes metal, I get to a part in a song and I'm like, “That’s an Aaron part." I don't know if you understand the influence your style has had on punk and hardcore and metal, and what do you think of that influence? And do you hear it too when you're listening to bands?

AARON: It's funny. (pauses) I'm in this other band, Final Agony and we played the FYA Fest a few weeks ago. And I saw some really good bands. I was watching this other band, I don't even remember what they're called, but they had this part and I was like, whoa, this part is fucking cool. I really liked this, I'm going to figure this out. As I was playing it out on my guitar, once I figured it out, I realized that it was "Vocal Test," with just like a little hitch thrown in there. I don't always hear it, honestly. It's pretty crazy. I think it's cool. I'm part of this lineage that got handed to me, and then I handed it to other people and it is still going on. I think it's really awesome.
JOHN: Yeah, I read an interview and someone said, "Aaron Melnick is my favorite guitar player." Yeah, that's right. He should be.

AARON: I don't know about that. (laughs)
JOHN: So when we've been talking a lot about the past, aside from getting older and stopping hanging out every night, and the perspective that life brings, what is important to you about still making this music, still playing out in dive bars and fests? Why do you keep doing it?
AARON: I enjoy it! Plain and simple. I love playing. I think it's fun. It feels good. It sounds good. It's cool like playing that FYA fest the other day. It was cool to look out and see people dancing to the music and stuff and that, but I do it for myself more than anybody else. If other people like it, that's really cool too. But for me, it's a way to express myself. I don't know if there's a deeper reason, but it seems like it's what I'm meant to do. It's my purpose.
JOHN: And it's fun connecting the dots. Like Dave Araca and the older kids brought us in, it is now our responsibility, too.
AARON: There's a natural inclination, I think, to feel threatened by the next generation. And you could see it in so many different scenes everywhere. I know Radio Birdman didn't like The Saints, so they felt threatened by The Saints, but it's part of the natural progression and it's good. Everything is more intense, the more brutal, hardcore bands are more brutal. Guitar sounds are more powerful. I mean, production values have gotten better.
JOHN: When you started recording and playing music, you had that little gorilla practice amp. How has technology changed in the time you've been using it? And what does it do for making the music you make? Is it easier? Is it more challenging? Is it, I mean, because you went from Rap Arts (after school center for troubled youth that had a makeshift recording studio) to Rob Orr's (Unreal City, Integrity) studio, right?
AARON: You can hear your sonic vision quickly and hear what works. It makes it so much easier, honestly, nowadays with the quality you can get at home. Nuclae was actually recorded in the Sanderson Photography Studio, it was a huge room. Rob has really great equipment, he spent some money on his equipment. He actually has stuff from Mars. He has one channel from Mars, one with preamps in it. But yes, going back to Rap Arts, I remember the recording, if you listen to that Die Hard demo, which we released as, *"Die Hard - Off the Bat " demo*. I think you can hear the bass and drums in one speaker, and the other speaker has guitar and vocals. That's called High Fidelity. So that's where we started. Back in the 1990s, I bought the shittest 4-track and it was expensive for me, it was three hundred and fifty dollars. It was called a Fostex X 18. Maybe there's a little bit shittier one. (laughing) When I got that it was a big piece of equipment for me. I wrote a lot of Integrity songs on that thing, and I would just write, I would experiment with it. If you heard some of the original versions of stuff like "Armenian Persecution" is on

piano. The original version of "Search for Divinity" is an acoustic song. You know what I mean? Some of the songs started really funny on there and then became Integrity songs.
JOHN: *Bringing Out The Beast* is both the title of your first novel and a new album by your new band. Can you tell us about those projects, how they originated and how they're related?

AARON: Well, *Bringing Out the Beast*, the book started with the conversation I had with this dude John Piche, an old friend of mine, probably in 1999 maybe. Yeah, probably when me and John Piche lived together. We had a conversation one night, we were just talking about sci-fi ideas and you said, "What if you had a drug that was sentient and you tell the story from point of view from the drug?" It kind of blew my mind. I was like, "Wow." I had just seen *Island of Dr. Moreau* or something, and I wanted to add the idea of genetic modification to the story. In any case, I started writing the story. I started writing it with a pencil in this big hardbound lined notebook I had. I carried a little book around with me everywhere I went. Whenever I had an idea, I'd write in this little book. I typed out an early version and I sent it to my friend, Bill Gill. He liked it and had some suggestions. He was the first person to read it and also gave me encouragement. Then I think my sister read it. You read it a couple times and it kept changing. But at the core it was...If you've ever been addicted to anything and I've had some issues with addiction, you have this voice in your head that tells you it's okay. Just do one more. Just do it one more time. You're okay. You should do more. Even with nicotine, which is actually one of the strongest addictions there is, actually. Maybe you don't have this, but I have this, you're almost talking to yourself but it is your addiction talking to you. It's like, go ahead, just pour another cup of coffee so then you can light that cigarette. It's going to taste so good. You know what I mean? I started exploring that voice more and more. I feel like I've saved myself. Fitness and nature and stuff like that helped me a lot. I wanted to show a little hope in this book. Although the book is pretty dark, it's not a feel good book. Also at the same time, I've continued to write songs and some of these songs relate to the novel's story.
JOHN: So Nuclae's *Bringing Out The Beast* is a concept album for the book, or are they not directly related?
AARON: They're related. Actually in the book there are songs almost like *Lord of the Rings*, when Tolkien placed songs at climactic points. Not every song in the book is a song on the album, but there's a lot of song lyrics in both. There is a group of people in the book who have a library of songs recording their history. Inspired by the Roma and the Jews and the Moors as well, when they were all persecuted by the Spanish, they came up with flamenco music. Or how early hardcore was a response to Ronald Reagan's conservatism. I wanted to portray that in the book and the album.
JOHN: But what is the book about? So it has this basic premise of there's a sentient drug, and then what was your elevator pitch for the book?
AARON: The book is a Sci Fi dystopian vision of the future. There's a group of people that augment their DNA to remain competitive in the hyper industrialization of mechanization and robotics. These DNA altered people are basically a counterculture and they are called The Nuclae. Then there's this addict, he's addicted to that drug that has its own sentience within his head. He has to go on the run and he enters the underground world of the Nuclae. But the powerful interests after the addict will stop at nothing to get a hold of him.
JOHN: Was the creative process different when approaching the music and book?
AARON: Well, I've been writing music my whole life, I guess I've been writing my whole life, but not writing a novel. So songs are a little bit easier to write for me. And I play riffs until I find something that I like and then I put 'em together. If they don't work, I try something else. So the music came a lot easier to me. Writing that book is one of the hardest things I've ever done because while you're writing it, you're like, "Shit, if this happens, then I have to go back to this part 40 pages ago because that means that I have to change this." And for someone like me, I was all over the fucking place, man, it was difficult to keep

organized. That was one of the hardest things, finding the time to write this thing. And towards the end, I was talking to Dwid and he asked if I was almost done with the book. I told him I was almost done, but there were so many little things to do and I never had time. He told me, "You should just stop doing anything else. Put everything else on hold and just finish it." And that was actually really good advice. It took me maybe three days or something, I just sat down and I did nothing else for three days. I did have to go back and do some edits after that. But that's how I finished the book. Honestly, it was one of the hardest things I've ever done. Now I think I'm going to apply that to songwriting. I have started to do that. I've already started writing another Nuclae record and I am thinking about writing another book. Although this next book I think would be more about hardcore. So maybe the next Nuclae album might be more hardcore. I'll see where it goes.

JOHN: I know the book's only been out a couple of weeks at this point, but what's the reaction been? What was your expectation?

AARON: Well, the experience of putting music out is pretty quick. You know if people like it or think you suck. You know what I mean? But the experience of putting out a book, I am asking more of the audience. I'm trusting them with something that I created with my thoughts and words. A book is a bit more concrete. I'm trusting the audience more. Everybody who has read it so far has said that they really liked it. I didn't know it would be so long because when I wrote it on Google Docs it was one hundred and ninety pages, so I thought, it's gonna be like two hundred pages. I wanted to keep it short. So when it came back four hundred and thirteen pages, I was like, holy shit, that's a lot to ask for someone. Even if you're not into science fiction, I tried to model it on Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. That's one of my favorite science fiction books. I love that book. And I feel like that book is social commentary. It's fiction commentary. I mean, it was just how he saw his world. I mean, you could tell there's real shit in there. And I feel like my book is similar. I'm not saying that my book is as good by any stretch of the imagination.

JOHN: It's not. (both laughing)

AARON: But my book, I feel is honest. How I strived to be like Slayer when I started Integrity. I strive to be like Huxley.

JOHN: I want to talk about the new band Nuclae. How has your songwriting changed since the Die Hard days?

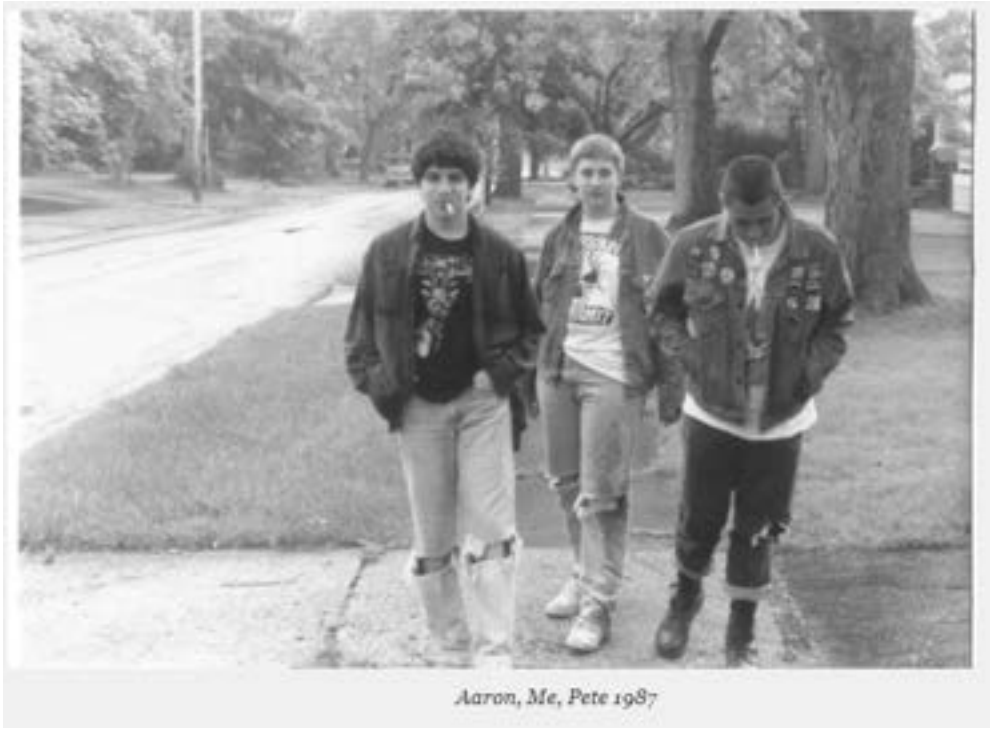
AARON: Yeah, well, I guess I graduated from two minute songs to three minute songs, so that was an accomplishment. But yeah, I don't know. The music is still pretty much standard, heavy, hardcore. It's very similar to Integrity. Somebody told me that it could be Integrity's sixth album or something, which was funny. (laughing) That could be kind of accurate. I even have Dwid on it, he sings the song "Hell Hollow." My last album with Integrity was *Seasons in the Size of Days*. We were starting to be a little more experimental, a little more eclectic. And this is kind of similar to that.

JOHN: You're a musician. You painted the cover of the book. You're an author now, you're a mushroom hunter, teacher, filmmaker who made some of my favorite movies. And I'm going to start referring to you as my friend Aaron "Multi-instrumentalist" Melnick. What projects would you still like to accomplish, creatively and personally?

AARON: Well, I still have this dream of doing an animated version of the novel, like an *Akira* type version of my novel. I don't think I can do animation that well. I know I could probably learn how to do that, and I would actually like to do that, but I do have a career separate from all this, I don't have that much time. (laughs) But that's one thing I would love to do. I have made

some shorter movies, I guess you could call 'em, but I would like to make a live action film. I love art. So I've tried to dabble. I've done sculpture. I'm always trying to learn some new skill. I might not master any of 'em, but I like to learn a lot of new things. I think that's really cool to incorporate new things into your art that you're into at that time - a new style or a new phase. Maybe the stuff that I do is not such a dramatic reinvention of myself, but I feel like every recording I've ever done is, there are no recordings that sound that much alike. You know what I mean? Even in Integrity, all the four LPs that I was involved in, they all are totally different. *Systems Overload* is hardcore. *Those Who Fear Tomorrow* was inspired by eighties metal. That's not very climactic, but that answers it. I would love to do some more shows with Nuclae. That'd be awesome. So if you want to book us, hit me up.
JOHN: Well, when I interviewed you in 1989 in a Sunoco gas station, I asked as a final question, "Do you have any final thoughts?" Do you remember what you said?
AARON: Yeah, I remember exactly what I said. And I still think that, "When you give up your dreams, you die."

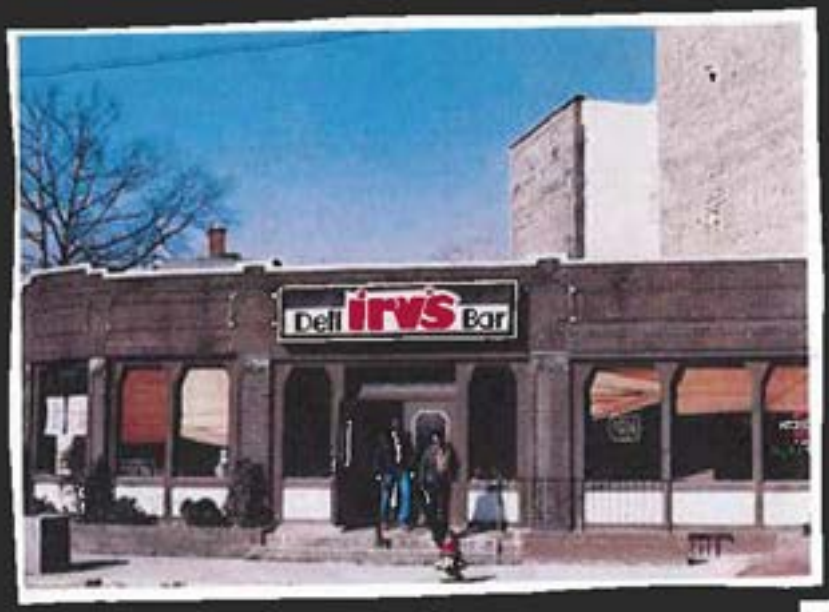
The Bringing Out the Beast vinyl and t-shirt at Rebirth Records https://rebirthrecords.bigcartel.com/
Bringing Out the Beast novel is available through Aaron or Amazon. Aaron can be reached at https://www.instagram.com/_nuclae_/



Aaron, Me, Pete 1987

HARDCORE PICTURE PAGES COLORING TIME!!

THE DAY NYHC CAME TO CLEVELAND HEIGHTS



The thing about Coventry back in the day is that it ran on drugs. Weed, cocaine, pills, alkahaul.

Countercultural, drugged up hippies, schizophrenic burnouts from rich families, Hell's Angels bikers, and a loose assortment of punks and baby winos.

There was a malevolence on the street, a dark and mean and filthy exploitative shadow…

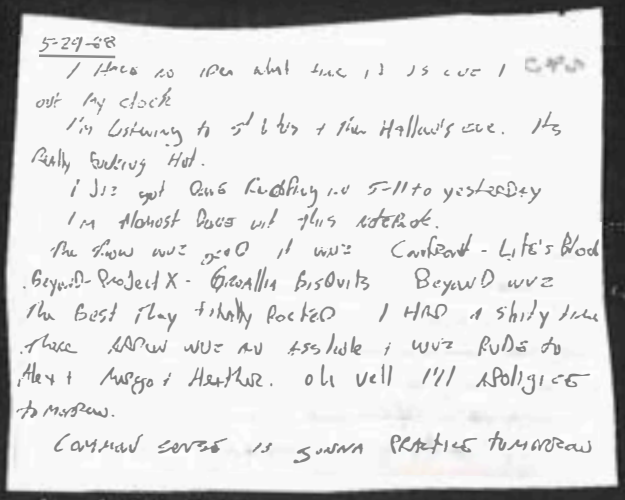
Irv's was a den of scum and villany and how Tom Front got them to agree to a hardcore show in the middle of Sunday afternoon attests to the weirdness of Coventry and the age we lived in.

May 29, 1988 around about 2 pm.

The punks walked toward Irv's Deli. Some beat up van held together by stickers trolled around the block looking for a parking spot. The sun was out, making the mild day feel hotter, I wore jeans which would come to misery once inside the sweaty airless side room of the deli. I stood on the pavement as Alex walked down Coventry, boots clipping, his cut off jeans and winter hat both looking damp. He collapsed on the sidewalk to tie his boot lace, but having just walked the five miles from his Shaker home to Hampshire Road must have taken a few hours off his life. He was understandably tired, hot, and cranky.

While we debated a pop from Carroll Drug, a van creaked to a stop next to us. Some kid fell out the side, and asked if a hardcore show was happening here today. This turned out to be Life's Blood, a last minute addition to the already packed bill. I later bought a seven inch from that same kid, who was sitting at the back of that van putting stuff away. He had to dig it out, since they were on the verge of leaving. Last minute, I got one of the best hardcore 7 inches ever recorded.

I remember a few other things from the show. I went to pee just as Porcell and gang busted into the first Project X song. By the time I got back to my spot near the back, Porcell thanked everyone for coming out. I totally missed their five song set.



5-29-98
I have no idea what time it is cuz I [illegible] out my clock
I'm listening to Sublime + the Hallows cuz. It's Really fucking Hot.
I just got done reading 1 5-11 to yesterday
I'm almost done w/ this notebook.
The show was good it was Confront - Life's Blood. Beyond - Project X - Grenallia Biscuits Beyond was the best play totally rocked I had a shitty time there cause was an asshole i was rude to Alex + Margo + Heather. oh well I'll apologize to morrow.
Common sense is gonna practice tomorrow

The other thing was just how hot it was inside Irv's. My guess is that he didn't have air conditioning. I am not sure I remember punk shows having air conditioning until the late 1990s.

Tom Front worked the door, probably pretty flushed, as he collected out damp sock dollars. All us cornfed Midwest bumbkins still moshed in a circle pit. Like we learned from our crusty ancestors and *Another State of Mind*. The New York Crew had started *dancing hard* and mocked us viciously. Not me, though, I don't dance.

After the show and hanging out a bit, I walked back to 2622 Princeton Road, probably with Alex. Perhaps bickering the whole time about which band was the best.

At the time, it was just what we did. Looking back on it, the historical nature of it, seeing all those bands on one bill, in a small room, it takes on a legendary hue. But these shows are still being scrapped together, in parking lots and warehouse loading docks. Go to every one, because forty years from now, some kid will want to hear all about it.

Aaron, Dwid, Brian from Confront in purple, Project X John

SPENCER SUNSHINE

Countercultural Fascism

JOHN PICHE: So if you'd introduce yourself and kind of give us a background of who you are.

SPENCER SUNSHINE: Sure. My name is Spencer Sunshine. I hold a Ph.D. in sociology. I've researched and written about the far right for 20 years now, which is a little shocking. I've written for a bunch of different academic and popular publications. And most recently, I had a book come out last year on Routledge. It took me five years to research and write. It's called Neo-Nazi Terrorism and Countercultural Fascism. The Origins and Afterlife of James Mason's Siege.

JOHN: How did you get into this work researching the far right and how, then, did you discover the James Mason material? Because it seems you had fantastic access to the Mason archive.

SPENCER: Like so many people of my generation, it was through conflicts with Nazi skinheads. I grew up in a small town in Georgia just outside of Atlanta. My friends and I would go to punk shows in Atlanta. So I was going to Atlanta shows, maybe 1988 to 1991. At that time, the city was overrun by Nazi skinhead groups. In fact, the Nazi skins were the only organized political faction in the punk scene. To counter them, we ended up founding, I guess today would be labeled, an anti-fascist group to combat that Nazi presence and to actively push back against them. We were helped and encouraged by a group of adults who were doing grassroots community work around anti-racist and anti-hate in a more organized way. Through the association with them we learned a lot about the white supremacist movement.

As time went on, I got into more regular political work in the mid-2000s. I encountered a group of crypto-fascists cross recruiting in the anti-globalization, radical ecologist, anarchist movements. I wrote an article exposing them. My interest grew and I started focusing on anti-Semitism, particularly on the Left. As I did more and more research on these hate groups it basically just spiraled. After I finished my doctorate I was tapped to work as a fellow at a think tank. Then Trump was elected, the first time around, and everything exploded.

JOHN: Yeah. And I think a lot of people were surprised by the racist, white power explosion after Trump was elected. But as someone who's connected to the punk/underground music scenes as we were in the 1980 and 1990s, it wasn't a huge shock. Nazi skinheads have been a consistent threat. But James Mason and your research into this book demonstrate how these racist, hate groups amplified their voice and how they've maintained their presence. Could you begin by telling us the history you discovered of this neo-Nazi fascist movement and how James Mason fit into that movement?

SPENCER: Sure. James Mason is this neo-Nazi terrorist ideologue. He joined the American Nazi Party at age fourteen in 1966. So he is a lifer in the American Nazi movement. He is thoroughly committed to it. It's his life's work. He wrote a book. It's an anthology of his newsletter called *SIEGE*. This book was edited by Michael Moynihan (author of Lords of Chaos).

In this book, Mason says that there's no point in National Socialists doing any kind of traditional or legal political organizing. No point in having rallies. No point in forming organizations, making propaganda, almost any of these things. Instead, what Nazis should do is engage in dramatic and public acts of violence in the hope that these acts will contribute to the destabilization of society and the government. After this destabilization, and only after this, will neo-Nazis will have a chance of seizing power. I do think he's right in his perspective that there are no vested interests of society who want a neo-Nazi party to gain open power. I think he's not wrong in this, but it's a fuzzy headed idea. The book came out in 1993. When it came out the book was kind of ignored. It was revived around 2015 on this platform called Iron March, where a lot of the real and aspiring global neo-Nazi terrorist groups have come together. Mason's message seemed to fit contemporary circumstances. This is when we see this whole weird mass of people start committing racist attacks, doing random apolitical massacres, doing school shootings, all after becoming influenced by neo-Nazi terrorist doctrines.

Suddenly, Mason's message of dramatic violence and murderous chaos makes him a very important ideologue. Because the movement began to advocate for a decentralized global network of neo-Nazi terrorism, especially online. There are neo-Nazi arrests and attacks going on constantly around the world. The neo-Nazis' influence blended more "apolitical" things like school shooters, incels, other kinds of public violence. There is a strong serial killer fetish as well.

JOHN: I do want to get into how it manifests today. But first, let's go back to the American Nazi Party, the Party that Mason joined at fourteen. What did that look like? It was coming out of the 60s, out of the civil rights movement. How did the right, the far right, organize in the aftermath of the racial advances of the 1960s and 1970s? And where did Mason fit into that?

SPENCER: Right. It's kind of a complicated story, because the far right has multiple pieces to it, because there's the white supremacist piece, and then there's the more "moderate" pieces, some of whom now control the government. You won't find much difference between the John Birch Society's rhetoric and what Trump and Musk are saying. What happens in terms of fascists after World War II is ...you could be an open Nazi supporter before World War II, right? There were well-placed people, respected in our society, who were open Nazis. Then it became taboo after the War. Some groups re-branded as crypto-Nazi groups. These formed, but they kept their message a little bit on the down low. In 1959, almost fifteen years after the War, we saw the first open neo-Nazi group parading around in brown shirts, and waving swastika flags. This is the American Nazi Party. They were encouraged by the rise of the McCarthy Hearings. They think, "McCarthy's good, but he didn't go far enough." It's later in the 1960s that the American Nazi Party positioned itself against the New Left and the civil rights movement. Their first demonstration was against U.S. involvement in Lebanon. It was called "*Save Ike from the Kikes*," which is interesting because they're almost like taking a pro-non-white, pro-Middle Eastern stance. Anyway, some complicated politics.

The American Nazi Party really became known because it was led by a guy named George Lincoln Rockwell. He was very good at grabbing publicity. He was a PR guy in his prior life. Rockwell used these shocking, very taboo, symbols to attract people. The attraction was the very outrageousness of it all, and once he reeled people in - the indoctrination of traditional National Socialist propaganda began.

Rockwell's American Nazi Party functioned as an agitprop theater group through most of the 1960s. They didn't kill anyone. Rockwell, though, was killed by a supporter. But I found in my research, there wasn't actually an open neo-Nazi massacre in the United States until 1977.

The neo-Nazi movement we know today, the super violent, aggressive, decentralized movement, did not exist in the 1960s. The 1960's American Nazi Party centered around a very specific, organized structure. The Nazis were not using the kind of violence we're used to seeing today. Other groups, like the Klu Klux Klan, were enacting that violence and terror. Mason joined this organized, propaganda-based American Nazi Party in 1966. He's very young. He's fourteen-years-old. Which might seem strange to be so young, but when you look at what is happening online today with the interest in terrorist doctrines, these kids are often very young. The guy who founded the *Feuerkrieg Division*, which is an influential neo-Nazi hate group, was twelve-years-old when he founded it.

This is similar to Mason. I think Mason is always thinking about appealing to fourteen-year-olds. It explains some of the crazy things he says, talking about Charles Manson, who was a friend of his, as well as the adoration of serial killers and this appeal to anti-system violence, right, it seems to be pretty unfocused, almost immature.

JOHN: By the 1970s what was the American Nazi Party? Rockwell had been killed. Members did not like the new leader. The party began to break up into a bunch of different factions. Some of them became murderers, mass murderers, including in Cleveland, Frank Spisak, who killed three people and had an odd career in the press.

SPENCER: I think Spisak was on death row the longest of anyone. There were Supreme Court cases about him. There are few famous Supreme Court cases brought by neo-Nazis, including *Brandenburg versus Ohio*. Brandenburg was a Klan leader who was also friends with James Mason. The lawsuit concerned where the line between free speech and advocating violence is. And then, of course, the famous one is the Skokie lawsuit. One of these splinter factions from Rockwell's Party, the NSPA, wanted to march in this town, Skokie, Illinois, where a lot of Holocaust survivors lived. The march was really a feint to keep holding these rather large rallies they were leading in Marquette Park, Chicago, a community that was resisting desegregation. Have you ever heard about MLK being hit by a rock? That happened at the protests in Marquette park. It led him to say, he had never seen violent mobs in the South like he had in Chicago. The Skokie thing was actually a feint to get a legal right to march there so the NSPA could go back up to Marquette with impunity. And so that was another famous neo-Nazi lawsuit.

Some people don't know this, but in the Blues Brothers, the scene where they run over the "Illinois Nazis" is actually a quite literal reference about the Skokie incident. Except no one got run over, really. And the speech Henry Gibson gives in that scene is actually taken verbatim from a documentary about one of the other Nazi splinter groups. It's in a documentary called *The California Reich*. And again, that splinter group is led by another guy James Mason worked with. So there's all these splinter groups, coming out of what had been the American Nazi Party, going on. This is when the neo-Nazi movement, as we know it today, starts to fracture into many different groups. There are murders emerging from these groups. There is no central party. James Mason

is part of all this. The groups are all arguing with each other, trying to take control of each other, feuding with each other, fusing with each other.

Mason's a central part of this. He's in southern Ohio, I should note, at the time, he's in Chillicothe. A lot of Mason's action goes around in that area. They're holding marches in Cincinnati, where Jerry Springer is the mayor at the time. And people are pressuring Springer to suppress the marches. This is the late 1970s.

Mason reflects on all of this stuff, marches and rallies, and concludes that there's no point in doing any of this legal, political work. Mason wants to move to terrorism. Not guerrilla warfare. It's beyond guerrilla warfare. Guerrilla warfare implies you're an armed part of a bigger political movement. And Mason moves to saying, "No, we just need random terrorism." These are Mason's answers to what goes on in the 1970s.

This is all a continuation of the reconstruction of National Socialism in the United States after its delegitimization during World War II. It's a complicated web of intricacies.

JOHN: And backstabbings. And it seems like that's one of the things these guys do really well is fight with each other as much as anything else. Can you unpack that a little bit? As to what are they fighting about? I mean, don't they have ideologies that are very similar? Or are there breaks? Is Mason really more radical than someone like Rockwell?

JAMES MASON

SPENCER: Well, I think small, small radical political movements always argue with each other a lot. With these guys, part of it is because they have a doctrine, and part is that they haven't had a centralized party since Rockwell. There are so many factional smaller groups so everyone's vying for dominance. They can't have a live and let live perspective. There is a tremendous amount of violence which is often between group members and some violence aimed at other groups. It's very strange. If you look at the breakdowns of violence perpetrated by the white supremacist movement, sometimes they're killing people from historically oppressed groups, but a lot of times they are killing each other. The internecine feuds, criminal actions, and home invasions account for a lot of the violence. But there are shootouts with the police, too. And not uncommonly, they'll slaughter their own families, they'll kill their girlfriend or wife or kids or whatever.

There is just like a lot of violence in general, you know, and this is a movement that ideologically rejects ethics and thinks it's beyond good and evil. This was an important thing for the actual Nazi regime, they did not feel bound by any traditional ethics. Plus they see this as a revolutionary movement. Generally, revolutionary movements aren't shy about using violence. These groups attract pretty fringe people. It doesn't just attract them, but it gives them a license to do what they want. Because we could say the radical left attracts fringe people too. But the radical left is not promoting violence in this kind of way. The radical left doesn't create this internal violent culture. Certainly not this sort of interpersonal violence. I would say that neo-Nazism is a constant fixture in American life. In fact, National Socialism has now been in the United States for over one hundred years. The first group was established in 1922 by German expatriates. This is a permanent part of our society. And it's kind of a small but permanent kind of politics

and it's not going to change. It is in some ways the logical conclusion of far right politics, right? You'll see white supremacist groups saying this, which is quite useful as a recruiting pitch to more moderate people: when conservatives say “Western civilization,: they actually mean “white.” They claim if you really do want to take control of society, well then, you need someone like Hitler and a one party State. If you're against the “International Bankers,” the neo-Nazis will say it's because they’re Jewish and we need to get rid of Finance Capital - it's the logical conclusion of a lot of far-right stuff. So it's not going to go away. There could be some other idea that could take its place, but right now it's still the hardest right wing thing - the most extreme form of the ideas circulating on the far right.

JOHN: I don't want to delve too extensively into this just yet, but the neo-Nazi factions we are discussing seem distinct from the Patriot movement or those Tea Party activists who emerged following Obama's election. While they may draw from a similar reservoir of sentiment, they differ in their methods and, I suspect, their core ideologies. Would you agree?

SPENCER: Again, it just sounds like typical far-right anti-communism. And this is why you've seen the militias just basically get on the Trump train, right? In 2015, they supported Cruz and his presidential bid. They did not, they were not all on board for Trump. Later after he won the nomination in the first term, they kind of pivoted to get on board with him. But a lot of their ideas clash with his. Some of the militia’s ideas are not that much different from the rest of the right, except some of the decentralization we'll talk about. The militia movement’s relationship to white supremacists is kind of odd because of the idea’s background. A lot of these ideas come out of a guy named William Potter Gale, who created a movement around the idea called Posse Comitatus in 1971. He’s just a Christian Identity minister, which is this racist form of Christianity. C.I. had become intertwined with neo-Nazism too. And so a lot of ideas that circulate today come from him. The idea that the county sheriff is the highest authority in the land and he can reject any laws he wants. This comes out of Posse Comitatus. All the sovereign citizen legal gobbledygook comes out of his ideas. And he is an explicit white supremacist and anti-Semite. But as the militia movements evolved over time by 2000s, there have been three or four waves, each wave becoming less and less white supremacist.

WILLIAM POTTER GALE

There was a big revival in 2008, when the Tea Party came up and the Oath Keepers and the Three Percenters formed then as well. Really, there are no white supremacist leaders in it, like open ideological white supremacists. I mean, OK, are they implicitly racist in the way that someone would say a lot of the far right is? Yes. Are they explicitly racist? No, they're not. And they're very sensitive to that accusation. These groups also are very decentralized.

You know, historically, before the Civil War, proslavery advocates and those resisting desegregation advocated for states' rights. Instead of states' rights, with the failure of that rhetoric, Gale proposed “county rights.” And so there's decentralization there and these groups are always looking towards these pre-constitutional forms in American history, like the Articles of Confederacy and Maritime Courts. So they're highly anti-government in that they want this sort of far right decentralization. Now,

this clashes with Trump, which is one of the interesting things, but it also clashes with the neo-Nazis who want a centralized authoritarian super state. Nazis are not free marketeers. They do not believe in a laissez faire economy.

Whereas these guys are the militias and such are super, super, super into this. So there are some real differences going on. There are differences in wanting to separate themselves, the militias, from white supremacists, because people of color are welcome in these groups. I don't want to say gay men or other people like maybe group by group. Maybe there's some that accept them. But largely, they're multiracial or they wish to be multiracial groups I think they authentically do. If people are willing to stomach what's going on. All this is to say, there are authentic differences between these movements.

JOHN: Well, getting back to Mason, we have Rockwell as his kind of white power godfather. And then who was Joseph Tommasi? And how did those two, Rockwell and Tommasi, with competing levels of ideological severity and tactics influence what Mason goes on to do?

William Luther Pierce

SPENCER: A lot of interesting things go on in the 1970s as the American Nazi Party splinters. Some people form a terrorist wing. There are also odd things like an explicitly openly gay neo-Nazi group founded in California, the National Socialist League. But amongst this terrorist wing, we have James Mason. He formed a group called the National Socialist Movement, who strangely are still around today, and marched at Charlottesville.

William Pierce, who ends up writing the Turner Diaries, forms a group called the National Alliance. Joseph Tommasi splits from Pierce to form the group called the National Socialist Liberation Front. Tommasi's in California. He's in L.A., in El Monte. And they're aping the new left. They're aping the style of it. So these guys appear countercultural. Previously, neo-Nazis had been very culturally conservative. They had short haircuts. They listened to classical music. They acted like traditional conservatives in society, socially and culturally. The NSLF, the National Socialist Liberation Front, is not like this. They are explicitly countercultural. They don't wear these uniforms. They do drugs. There aren't these conservative restrictions. And this allows a lot of young people to embrace the neo-Nazi movement in the 1970s, young teenagers especially. These younger people are into racism and anti-Semitism while rejecting the old fogeys of the movement. And then Tommasi embraces terrorism openly. Now what they do is bomb some Marxist bookstores mostly and they do some tear gassing.

It's funny. You can find these articles about them in the newspaper archives, like they tear gas a big gathering asking for the reopening of the Rosenberg case, the Jewish couple that was executed for leaking nuclear weapons secrets to the Soviets. Tommasi's group does these things. They don't kill anyone, but they plant this idea that Nazis should engage in guerrilla warfare and that they should embrace modern cultural forms that young people are involved in. And Mason joins Tommasi's party. That's the connection.

JOHN: Tommasi meets a bad end, right? He's murdered.

SPENCER: He's murdered by a member of this group that used to be the American Nazi Party. As I said, Nazis love to murder each other.

JOHN: So James Mason is at home in Ohio. What's he doing to spread the message of this party he started, and how does he get membership, and what does his day-to-day activity organizing a neo-Nazi movement like?

SPENCER: Early on in the original party and then into the mid-1970s, Mason did little propaganda events. They hold free Rudolph Hess rallies in Cincinnati Square. Hess was one of the last major officials in the NSDAP, in the Nazi government, who was captured after the War, and he was never released. I think Hess committed suicide maybe in the late 1980s. He was held in Spandau Prison in Germany. So there was a movement to release Hess, and the Nazis, neo-Nazis loved this because it was like the one popular movement they could all get involved in, right? Mason set up a literature table at a county fair in Ross County, not big high-profile stuff. Mason was an editor and publisher. He designed magazines, and the neo-Nazis were pretty short on talented people. He was a graphic designer. He knew how to edit and print magazines. He produced a lot of neo-Nazi magazines in this group he founded, the NSM. He was in other groups. There were more acronyms. A lot of this is in that documentary, *The California Reich*, which is on YouTube. You should watch it if you're interested in 1970s neo-Nazism, it's fascinating.

He had been in this National Socialist Liberation Front movement secretly, and then it got revived in 1980, so he started his newsletter *SIEGE* originally as part of that, and after he split with them in 1982, he was on his own. Basically, Mason is in these big movements, but over time he's in these smaller and smaller splinter groups, until he pops up as a party of one, as I like to say, putting out his newsletter in his home in southern Ohio. *SEIGE* had an issue print run of no more than a hundred copies. It's very, very, very small. When it folds, he gives a list of names and subscriptions to two of his friends. There are sixty-six names on there, and he says some of them are trades.

JOHN: And let's talk a little bit about how information was spread in the 1970s, 1980s, and into the mid-1990s, before the Internet. Because I think a magazine like *SIEGE* or the other white nationalist newsletters you were talking about occupied a special place in the culture. In part, how they were spread. As you mentioned, the Nazi newsletter mailing lists were incredibly important. More than the magazines themselves, these mailing lists were what was valued and protected, right?

SPENCER: Right. Even well before the advent of the Internet, there was such a centralization of media, and it was so capital intensive for so many years, right? There were three TV networks. There was no cable for a long time. There would be one local newspaper in each city. And part of the effect of this is it blocked out anything on the left and right. There was one public voice and it was very hard to get alternative information out. One of the ways of getting your message out was to self-publish magazines and try to figure out how and where you could get distribution. Often difficult it was especially difficult

for neo-Nazis, there weren't a lot of places that would carry their publications. So you needed to have subscribers, and this is where these subscription lists came in, because it was a way to reach people and it was very difficult to reach them otherwise.

Obviously, with the advent of the Internet in the late-1990s, early-2000s, things began to change. I don't think it really gets going until after the World Wide Web, and this is really in the 2000s, where everything has to be on the Internet. Everybody didn't own a computer then.

In fact, Mason was doing his newsletter and he was mimeographing it himself. He actually got part of them printed. There's six pages in it. He got, at a printer, a red banner with the *SIEGE* title on each page then went home and mimeographed everything else himself. *SIEGE* got fused into the fanzine networks. Fanzines were these independently produced, usually xeroxed, self-produced magazines. Originally made by fans of science fiction, but then in the 1970s and 1980s, fanzines got picked up in the punk rock scene, often about music but then about other stuff. There became a whole huge network, there were thousands of them, and he sort of ended up sliding in on the edge of that. If you go back and talk to people involved, there was always a question about whether they would allow Holocaust denial literature, for example, in their review sections. Everything is accepted, right? No matter how crazy. And the Holocaust deniers are like, great, we'll take you up on that. The main ones like *Factsheet Five*, which was a magazine that just reviewed fanzines, would not. But some of these things were open questions. And so Mason's self-publishing venture ended up eventually sliding into these networks, into these self-publication networks. That all was designed to get around centralized media.

JOHN: Well, let's talk about the newsletter he produced, because it's the crux of your book, the second half of the book. So let's talk about what he was writing about and some of his innovations or additions to traditional neo-Nazi rhetoric.

SPENCER: There were several. First, his basic premise came out of these murders started happening in the late 1970s, most neo-Nazis were distancing themselves from that. Saying things like, “Oh no, we don't want these people. They are delegitimizing our movement.” Mason counterintuitively embraces them, and then he wraps up his ideological reasoning around them, right? And so, this is quite different from the others, this open and public embrace of murder, of serial killers, of mass murderers, right? And that's his main innovation.

He is influenced by Charles Manson. He makes a habit of writing prisoners, something a lot of radical groups do. And through this activity he runs into Charles Manson and befriends him. Mason decides Charles Manson should be the new guru for the neo-Nazi movement. This was the last straw for a lot of people, even people close to him, like Tom Metzger, the leader of the White Aryan Resistance, was like, “Hey, James, I love you, but no, like, bridge too far.” It's what broke up Mason's relationship with William Pierce, who had been his mentor when he was a kid. And I mean, Pierce is advocating mass terrorism, and nuking Tel Aviv, but he’s like, “Charles Manson was a bridge too far.”

Charles Manson connects James Mason with the 1980s counter-cultural underground because there's a real interest in Charles Manson. And its a connection beyond the people who help Mason out later, but bands like Sonic Youth who have songs about Manson and Lydia Lunch, right? “Death Valley ‘69.”

It's a common thing to have interest in Charles Manson. Then people find out there's this Neo-Nazi who is personal friends with Charles Manson and he's created this doctrine where people are supposed to worship Charles Manson as this new manifestation of Hitler.

Mason creates his own doctrine called "the Universal Order," a sort of crypto-spiritual approach based on Charles Manson's ideas. That major idea basically advocates, amongst other things, a natural order underneath the world. It's a kind of Gnosticism. The world is, for Mason, this corrupt Jewish controlled illusion. These are old, untrue conspiracy theories, just to be clear, but Mason says "it's a system where the Jews are pulling the strings of everyone else." What Mason adds to this old conspiracy theory is this idea that the natural order is National Socialism which if embraced can destroy the Jewish system.

And this is very useful if you belong to an unpopular political movement, because you don't have to accept defeat as the end of your movement. Nazis don't usually admit, "Oh, our movement was going great and then it got stopped. We lost World War Two." Right. Mason says, "this is an eternal universal thing." It gives you a good ideological grounding to continue your work, even when it's unpopular.

Mason was, also, influenced by a woman also who's embraced by the American Nazi Party named Savitri Devi, who promoted Hitler as an eternal being, which, again, had this function to reassure neo-Nazis after the War that their movement could and would succeed, that it wasn't over.

JOHN: Right. So before getting into the whole counterculture piece too deeply, can you give us a short history of *SIEGE* and Mason? What happened to him?

SPENCER: Nothing, Mason is still hanging out in his apartment in Denver. He still mentors young Neo-Nazis, one of them, this guy who was in this group called the *Atomwaffen Division* which was inspired directly by Mason's work was just given a life sentence for murdering a gay Jewish man in Southern California. There is this picture of him with Sam Woodward and Mason in Mason's apartment.

Mason comes into contact with these four countercultural guys. They discover him, they popularize him, and they publish him amongst their countercultural circles and the very niche circles in the 1980s and 1990s amongst industrial and neo-folk musicians and something called the extreme culture, which is kind of just what it sounds like. People just wallowing in the most extreme things. There are filmmakers and publishers. Mason's book came out in 1993. One of these guys, as I said, Michael J. Moynihan, publishes it.

In 1995, Mason went to jail. He had a real predilection for fourteen, fifteen, sixteen-year-olds. He had been arrested two times for photographing fifteen and sixteen-year-olds. When he got arrested, he had a fifteen-year-old girlfriend who had turned sixteen while they were going out, and he got arrested for threatening her and her new boyfriend, who wasn't white. You can imagine how this created more tension. They lived behind him in a house. It was all very strange. I mean, this is clearly somebody who's not the most level-headed person. He goes to jail for four years. He converts or embraces his own idiosyncratic version of Christianity that involves, of course, racism and anti-Semitism, but also

UFOs. When Mason gets out of prison he writes several books about this new religious outlook. Then he was released from prison in 1999. *SIEGE* is reissued after he gets out of prison in 2003. And it all just kind of fizzles off the radar. Until *SIEGE* gets uploaded online, I should say, in 2006. I knew about it because these counter-cultural figures started following Mason. Mason was rediscovered. He was physically rediscovered by these Iron March people. They found him and went to his apartment. And *SIEGE* was reprinted and revived, again. That's his short trajectory.

JOHN: Let's begin with the counterculturalists and who they were, where they came from, and why they latch on to Mason and Charles Manson's role in all of that? Maybe give us an overview of the collective first, and then we can get into some of the individuals.

- Boyd Rice with reporters during a demonstration for Charles Manson's false imprisonm

SPENCER: Sure. So what happens is that these four people who are all members of a paper organization called *The Abraxas Foundation*, a self-described occult, fascist think tank, find James Mason via the Charles Manson connection, and they're the ones who publish him and popularize him. So the first one is Boyd Rice. He is an industrial musician. Rice's industrial music is not like Nine Inch Nails, his band NON was atonal no-chord music, very jarring, pulls off of earlier European avant-garde traditions, sort of parallel and intersecting with the punk movement starting in the 1970s and continuing on. Boyd Rice is one of the best known of that original first wave of musicians. He's an American. He was already interested in Manson and Hitler when he met a gun dealer in 1986, called Victor Malik, who told Rice about this Neo-Nazi who was actually friends with Charles Manson and thinks he's the new Hitler. So Boyd Rice writes this gushing letter to James Mason talking about how Rice is totally into Mason's project and wants to help Mason out.

I should say a lot of this information comes from James Mason who sold his personal correspondence. He was an inveterate collector of all kinds of things, he kept every letter he had incoming and outgoing. He made carbon copies from the 1960s to about 2003 and sold them to an archive in Lawrence, Kansas. And so, there's sixty boxes of correspondence there. And this is why it took me five years to write this book. And there are many boxes and folders I have not even gone through. At the end, I was like, "naw, I'm not going to request these ten more folders." You know, at some point, my life has to continue on. And so I have all these letters, and they're crazy letters.

Anton LaVey, Adam Parfrey, Boyd Rice

Boyd Rice contacts James Mason, then Rice proceeds to introduce him to all these other people, including Adam Parfrey. Adam Parfrey, we'll go through more quickly, who's a publisher, he founded a press called

Feral House that became very influential. It has sold hundreds of thousands of books. Parfrey publishes all these guys. And is the first person to publish James Mason in a non-Nazi periodical, and the first person to put him in a book, which is a very famous underground anthology called Apocalypse Culture.

The third guy is a Satanist named Nikolas Schreck. He's a musician too. He's in this terrible band called Radio Werewolf. He is a Satanist. He puts Mason in a book, published by Parfrey, they create the circle where they're publishing each other and interviewing each other. It's a very self-referential book called The Manson File that also became a famous anthology, and he puts James Mason in his first film, which is a documentary called *Charles Manson Superstar*, which you can watch online. It was sort of interesting. Then Schreck marries Anton LaVey's daughter, Zeena. All these guys are interested in the Church of Satan.

The Church of Satan was founded by Anton LaVey. Like the American Nazi Party, it is the first open, and there's a similarity there, Satanist group. I'm writing an article right now about Nazi Satanism, and there's all these debates about precursors and stuff, but everyone's like, well, LaVey founded the first real, honest group. LaVey founded it in San Francisco in 1966. And LaVey's really a right-wing guy. I mean, at the end of the day, the Church of Satan is based in this weird, right-wing social Darwinist eugenicist stuff.

The fourth guy who joins a little later is Michael J. Moynihan. He's a younger man. He plays industrial music, too. This is how he gets in contact with Boyd Rice. Boyd Rice also introduces James Mason to Moynihan. Moynihan later shifts to playing neo-folk music, which is sort of descended from European folk music, but mixed in with this very dark feeling mood, again, sort of adjacent to the punk scene. And Moynihan is a publisher, too. He is good with languages, and he ends up editing. He meets Mason and immediately says, “I would love to turn the *SIEGE* newsletters into a book.” He edits them into an anthology. It takes him a number of years, and then he self-publishes it. And he's also a good publicist, so he distributes it through both neo-Nazi circles and underground countercultural music/art circles. He gets it in all these fascist-leaning fanzines, which themselves are distributed by Tower Books, a store chain that you would buy music at and fanzines and underground publications around the U.S. I had many people tell me they found out about these obscure fanzines, because they bought them at Tower. They were just on the magazine shelf. Moynihan also gets all kinds of attention in alternative weekly newspapers.

And so these are the four guys who pluck Mason out of this tiny hole he's in, publishing less than a hundred copies an issue, and only talking to very few people, after he alienated a bunch of his fellow neo-Nazis and white supremacists. You know, he's not talking to anyone, just the people who he can tolerate and will tolerate him. Then suddenly he is handed this huge audience in a circle he never would have, probably didn't even know about. He didn't like rock music. Had no connections to and would never have been able to gain access to this audience without the help of Rice, Parfrey, Schreck, and Moynihan. There's a story here about how radical cultural movements that aren't necessarily political can come into

contact with radical political movements and create this fusion and do something that none of them could have before.

JOHN: Yeah, and I'd like to spend some time talking about that, because it seems to me that there's something else going on. Tom Metzger and WAR have a cable access show. Bob Larson was part of this whole thing, Geraldo, Oprah, Phil Donahue, all these people pick up on some of this extreme culture that we're talking about with these four guys, and these guys somehow parlay that into appearances and different ways of promoting themselves and this odious ideology. So can we talk a little bit more about how they used each other and that conversation between Mason and Metzger and Rice and Moynihan and Schreck all played out?

SPENCER: So Mason doesn't, but these other guys are able to gain mainstream media coverage through their public visibility and extremity. Tom Metzger, who ran, as you said, the White Aryan Resistance (WAR), is a really fascinating guy. At one point, he won a Democratic primary in Southern California in a congressional race. He ran a group called the White Aryan Resistance. They recruited Nazi skinheads. Over time he moved to a revolutionary stance, totally promoted violence, embraced it, was into it, and became very notorious when the Nazi skinhead thing exploded in the U.S., which was about 1988. It's kind of crazy because in Britain the movement is older. You get these older British skins because they got involved in the 1970s or 1980s.

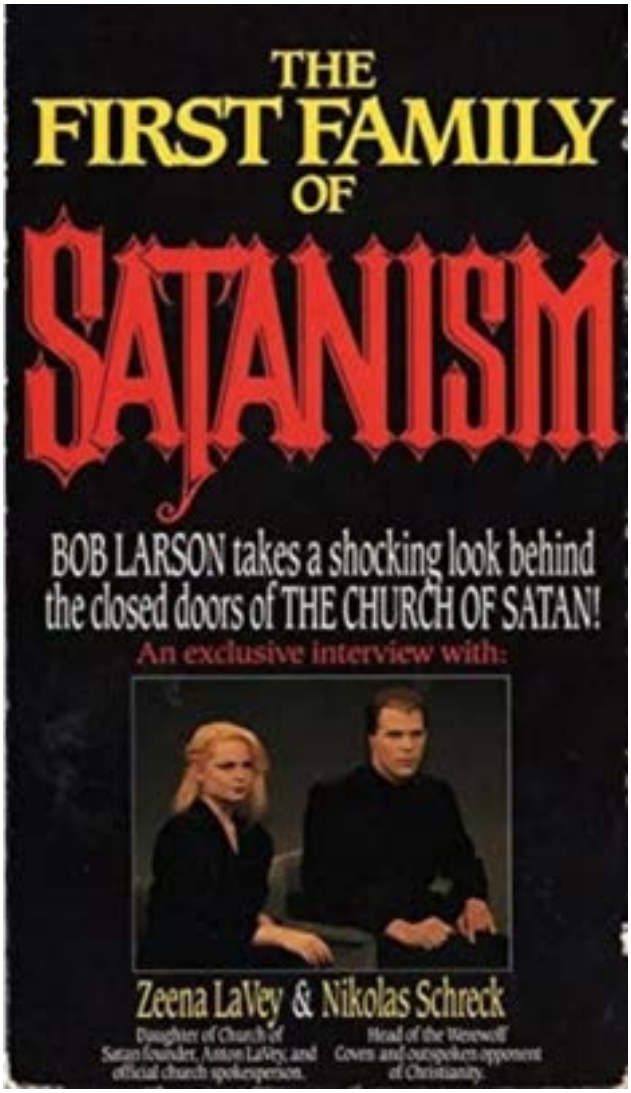
Metzger was very closely associated with skinheads and became very notorious for this association after one of his crew murdered an Ethiopian immigrant near Portland, Oregon in 1988. Metzger was sued in relation to the murder in an innovative civil suit by the Southern Poverty Law Center. And the lawsuit spread his fame. Metzger was all over local cable access shows. He exploited this to create community access to cable to create a syndicated racist show - *Race and Reason.*

Tom Metzger's cable access show, Race and Reason

Metzger had on this show Boyd Rice very early on in 1986. Soon after Rice meets Mason, in fact these letters to and from Mason to Adam Parfrey, and others, discuss how to get Boyd Rice on Metzger's show. Meanwhile I should say Tom Metzger and James Mason are very close. In fact, what was probably the biggest piece of publicity for Mason's book in the 1990s was when Tom Metzger was on a mainstream TV talk show, *The McLaughlin Report*, and in the middle of the interview he waves around a copy of *SIEGE* and he's like, "This is where things are really at."

Some of the others gained mainstream publicity because of "the satanic panic," which was this sort of folk panic about satanism. People are claiming they suddenly remembered under hypnosis or regression therapy that uncovered memories of abuse in satanic cults or covens. They're claiming they suddenly remembered that satanists were going around doing these ritual murders as part of a satanic mass or whatever. Satanists get a lot of publicity including Nikolas Schreck and his wife Zeena who is the spokesperson for the Church of Satan. Anton LaVey gets a lot of attention. The Abraxas guys have become tight with Anton LaVey. Both Michael Moynihan and Boyd Rice become priests in the Church of Satan and because of that they get reviewed in their internal the Church of Satan's magazine - *The Cloven Hoof.* They get a lot of attention from the Church of Satan's glowing review of them by the guy who later

became the head of the Church, Peter Gilmore. The magazine runs their ads, not too many people would run ads for a Nazi terrorist book, but the Church of Satan did.


THE
FIRST FAMILY
OF
SATANISM
BOB LARSON takes a shocking look behind the closed doors of THE CHURCH OF SATAN!
An exclusive interview with:
Zeena LaVey & Nikolas Schreck
Daughter of Church of Satan founder, Anton LaVey, and official church spokesperson.
Head of the Werewolf Coven and outspoken opponent of Christianity.

They're visible in "the Satanic Panic," at one point this concert that most of them participate in in San Francisco is taped for Geraldo Rivera's two-hour special on Satanism. It's been claimed to be the most popular, highest rated, TV special up to that point. Meanwhile, there's this guy, Bob Larson, who's a fundamentalist, evangelical Christian who's way into "the Satanic Panic." Larson has a radio show and Boyd Rice was a frequent guest, Nikolas Schreck and Zeena go on his show. There is one show called "Neo-Nazi Satanism" with James Mason and Michael Moynihan is present as well on that one. They're using Larson and Larson is using them. At one point, James Mason says to Larson, "You use us, we use you."

JOHN: Yeah when I had my college radio show back in those days, the Bob Larson stuff was famous for clipping soundbites. Glen Benton from Deicide was on Larson's show and Benton would do this demon persona and Larson would try to cast him out. It was ridiculous stuff. It was great theater. I mean they were all showmen.

SPENCER: This is why Mason, who is not a Satanist, really liked Anton LaVey, appreciated him, even though LaVey is Jewish. Mason compares LaVey to George Lincoln Rockwell, they were showmen, and they used these outrageous tactics to get media attention which brought people in because National Socialist doctrine is pretty boring and very stupid. So sitting there reading the 600 pages of Mein Kampf is not as exciting as doing something wild, talking about serial killers, and antagonizing people, per se. Hitler was very culturally conservative. People forget that while he did have avant-garde art influences, he was generally very conservative. I pointed this out to a friend of mine who's a guide in a former concentration camp about the industrial band Throbbing Gristle and their use of Nazi symbolism. They weren't Nazis, but they used a lot of Nazi imagery. It's an abrasive, extreme thing. And she said, "Spencer, the Nazis listened to things like polka bands. They were all about traditional German culture. They weren't avant-gardist trying to offend people." It's different from what Trump is doing. He is trying to offend people more than the NSDAP, Hitler's party, was.

So yeah, they are all able to use this showmanship and each other. Larson uses them. They use Larson. They're very conscious about what they're doing. James Mason was conscious about people being drawn by his extremes and particularly about Charles Manson. He was serious about Charles

Manson being his guru, but he also knew that young people, mostly boys, there's a big, big, strong element of misogyny throughout this whole thing. I don't explore it in my book because I got overwhelmed, but it's a huge part here. If you're a feminist scholar wanting to dig into this, please contact me. I will share my materials. It should be built out.

Mason knew that this would be an effective hook in catching people. There was a fad for Charles Manson in the 1980s that was growing and kind of peaked in the 1990s. The height of this was right when the *SIEGE* came out as a book, and it was when Guns N' Roses recorded a Charles Manson song on their album *The Spaghetti Incident?* Charles Manson became a big, big deal. And again, it was semi-ironic. Some people were into it. Some people were fascinated because he's an outlandish figure. Some people just think it's ridiculous to be into it. So it was all kinds of things to different people. Mason is aware that he's using this. And Moynihan has great timing because he's very sensitive to the cultural winds. The *SIEGE* book comes out just at the right time where they're able to get some attention. A lot of the attention in the alternative weekly papers are through the Manson angle.

JOHN: Yeah, I mean you couldn't spin a record around without hitting a Manson reference at one point, especially in the 1990s. You've read the correspondence of people like Boyd Rice and Adam Parfrey, and how much of it did they believe? Because in subsequent years they've tried to say, well, we were just being edgelords. We didn't really believe this. They've backtracked some of their involvement and participation, especially Moynihan. So how much do you believe was ideologically driven and how much was used for notoriety, shock, and fame?

SPENCER: Right, so there's a couple of different questions here. The first is, yes, they all – I think - they all tried to hide this. I don't think Schrek did so much because he's sort of shameless. He did limited stuff and he put Manson in a book and a film. There we go. You're not hiding from that.

Art Market

Greenspon gallery canceled an exhibition featuring artist Boyd Rice, an alleged neo-Nazi.

Benjamin Sutton

The others hid all this stuff as much as they could. But as you said, I got access to the personal correspondence and it is wild. People knew that Boyd Rice had some level of association with the Neo-Nazi milieu. There's a photo of Boyd in *Sassy* magazine, which was a very popular magazine for teenage girls, with a Nazi skinhead leader Bob Heick of the American Front, in uniform and holding knives. So he couldn't get beyond it. Especially, once it resurfaced that he had been on Tom Metzger's TV show. He's tried to downplay it and dismiss it and say, this sort of a lark and he was, you know, blah, blah, blah.

And Adam Parfrey, he was a publisher and he put white supremacist stuff in his books. But these books were about conspiracy theorists and other stuff, he was like, "oh, no, I'm exposing them for what they are." And it's just like I'm just into extremes for their own sake. Well, Parfrey, if you read his public documents, he's far right. He's a racist. He hates Latino people. He hates disabled people. I mean he's just a bigot, like a garden variety bigot. He shows adherence and sympathy to National Socialist ideals in the letters to Charles Manson and James Mason. He never does in public. He would never admit this stuff in public. But he's tied to people like James Mason far beyond just using him to publish his material.

Similar stories with the others, Boyd Rice is – because he's been in the hottest position, has always tried to downplay this stuff. And his letters are just wild. They have swastikas on them. They have *88*s on them. He says, "We're engaged in a campaign to fool people to think we're not Nazis but we're using this to get our ideas out."

Moynihan, even though today he is an ethno-separatist very publicly, at one point became very famous because he wrote a book called Lords of Chaos about the Norwegian black metal scene. I track it very carefully in my book how Moynihan went from being pretty open about being a Nazi and his Nazi sympathies to suddenly backtracking when he Lords of Chaos book comes out. Now he's not a Nazi. There are two years where he actually runs a campaign denying his past and attacking people. And all these writers and reviewers aid him in this. They believe his outright lies and even when it's clear they know the truth, they downplay the things he did. Like they'll say, "Oh, he just distributed *SIEGE*." But he actually created it, laid it out, published it himself and distributed it. You know what I mean? Today he still downplays his level of involvement. In the first introduction he wrote for the *SIEGE* book, he says, "I hope people use these ideas. I hope they don't just read about these ideas. I hope they enact them." And that's something he's never admitted. That first introduction got buried and forgotten about.

JOHN: And there was also a kind of a movement towards the end of the 90s into the 2000s, which I think led to the Alt-Right. Jim Goad and *The eXile* guys Mark Ames and Matt Taibbi. These guys were picking up on that thread of "how shocking can we be, how misogynist can we be, how racist can we be, up to the point where we can still deny it or excuse it with we're just joking. It's ironic satire."

SPENCER: So I hate to say you should read my book. But if you do read it, you'll see exactly what *Abaraxas* was saying and doing then is exactly what's being said and done now. I would say it's uncanny, but it's more than that. I don't know if they're the first people to do this. I don't make claims in the book. I just show what they do. There's not a lot of commentary per se in the book. I document what they did, what they said, but I avoid too much interpretation, let's say.

Partly, to get to your earlier question, I don't care what their intention was. Were these guys really neo-Nazis? I don't give a fuck. They helped this guy, James Mason, put this Nazi stuff into the world. They said and did these things. They helped all kinds of people in this network. They made appearances on these shows. I don't care about their reasoning for it. I just don't. I'm not saying it's an invalid question to ask, but even if the answer was, "They were doing it ironically," it doesn't matter. You know what I mean? The things that they said and did to avoid accountability are the things that are said and done now, word for word.

Were they the first person to do it? I couldn't tell you. You'd have to look at other sources from around the same time, right? This is a technical question.

These four guys start recruiting people around them, a couple dozen people who are essentially right-wing artists, musicians, and writers. And there are plenty of white supremacists scattered in there. And some of them, like Marilyn Manson, are on the edge of this. He's connected to both Anton LaVey, but also Boyd Rice. Rice says that Marilyn Manson told him that he was Marilyn Manson's mentor. I don't know, but they do clearly know each other and Rice is an early promoter of Marilyn Manson.

And of course, Jim Goad was part of this circle. Goad joined *Taki's Magazine*, which is where Richard Spencer and Gavin McInnes were working early on. Goad worked most recently for *Counter-Currents*, which is run by Greg Johnson, who I wrote an article for the Southern Poverty Law Center about. Johnson was involved in the re-issue of *SIEGE* in 2003.

And so there becomes another wave of this stuff. I definitely hadn't thought of Mark Ames and Matt Taibbi. They are the ones who ran *The eXile*. I was actually in Russia. I was living in Moscow in the late 1990s and *The eXile* was the alternative weekly in English there. They were tied to a fascist there. They published Eduard Limonov of the National Bolshevik Party. And it sounds like a bunch of names, but it's a small network of people. The National Bolshevik Party is infamous because one of their three founding members is Aleksandr Dugin, who is very well known now as one of the Russian fascists influencing the Putinist expansionist policy, although he's not tied to Putin directly. So yeah, this edgelord culture develops. They are some kind of key node in it. So no need for me to say it's this one group of people creating this specific way of denying things, but they clearly, if it's not super uncanny and they're obviously feeding into it. It's what became 4chan. This developed into edgelord internet culture, this obsession with extremes and this denial of responsibility. One person called it, "winky-wink fascism." They're acting like fascists. They're talking like fascists. But they're saying they're not fascists, but they really are fascists.

SEE... NOW HE'S SCARED! SO KEEP HAMMERING AWAY AT HIM... KEEP SOCKING UNTIL HE JUST NATURALLY FALLS APART! THAT'S THE WAY TO BEAT THE NAZI !!
PLUNK

John: Yeah. And Nick Fuentes is a great example of that and the Groypers and all that kind of stuff. It's an interesting churning of cultural influences. And it seems as Mason was active, then ignored, then rediscovered, which leads him to do a little bit more action and fall off only to be rediscovered by the next generation. How do we, and this is an unfair question, I know already at the beginning, how do we stop it? How does this archaeological cultural churning finally expel these ideas?

SPENCER: This is a really tough one. I mean, I don't know. Now on a network level, first these ideas seeped into structured neo-Nazi groups like the *Atomwaffen Division*. Mason was their advisor, but interestingly, they did exactly what he told them not to do, which was form a group of chapters with members. Other groups around the world were inspired by the *Atomwaffen Division*, like The Base and the *Feuerkrieg Division* and the *Sonnenkrieg Division* - plus all the splinters of the *Atomwaffen* going around the United States.

What happened then is this thing called "*SIEGE Culture*" was developed around the ideas in *SIEGE*. Out of that came *the Terrorgram* and the *Terrorgram Collective*, who used a series of shifting Telegram channels to promote these terrorist ideas. We are seeing more and more murderers connected to the *Terrorgram Collective*. This guy who just did a school shooting in Nashville was inspired by these ideas. It's not just the veneration of serial killers and school shooters, in particular, it's a promotion of school shootings, promoting child abuse, and some even promoting really random interpersonal murders. It's all blending together in a very disturbing way. And I don't know how we would suppress or disrupt that because of the technologies available for people to promote and spread these ideas. The internet has become a place where anything you express can be said on these irony-soaked chat platforms. This irony-poisoned stuff, I don't think it's a good thing. The availability of just the most extreme videos of

violence such as the beheading videos. It is just too appealing to certain people. Transgression has an appeal. Murder has an appeal. People have murdered each other as long as there's been humanity. Violence interests and appeals to people. That cat is out of the bag, and people are like, "What should we do to James Mason?" It doesn't matter. *SIEGE* exists, it's out there … now Mason writes weird Christian stuff. I mean, he's sort of irrelevant, again. It's not good that he's tutoring young neo-Nazis, but in reality, his importance is over.

I don't know what we do with these things. We're seeing the Trump administration enact watered down fascist ideas. I think Biden called him "a quasi-fascist." I like that, without getting into this long argument about if he is or isn't a fascist. Trump is creating these corrupt governmental structures right now that clearly do not respect equality or human rights or democracy. What we're seeing with these countercultural guys, today, is a subset of that. They're just more interested in interpersonal violence and they have a network that is spreading around the world. They don't feel tied to traditional political work. They don't care about Trump, even though they're building off a lot of the same energy, but they don't care about him. They want to murder people directly, not withdraw support for them and let them die on their own. That's the Trumpian way. So, I don't know. I mean, I think there's a lesson here is about, and maybe we've all learned, but I think Chloe Lum, who's in the band AIDS Wolf, said this on Blue Sky - this idea in the 20th century amongst the avant-garde that transgression was by itself good, that it was always a progressive impulse, even if the individual actors weren't saying something that was left-leaning. The impulse behind it was good because the system of the society was a problem. That is one reason people saw Feral House as a sort of left-leaning project because Parfrey was throwing out all these extremes. They're helping puncture "the consensus reality" or whatever. This again is a weird kind of Gnostic idea. But there was always the idea that at the end of the day, transgression would be progressive. But most of us now realize that transgression is not necessarily progressive and that anyone still laboring under that delusion should give it up, you know. And I think for a lot of us who were involved in these scenes, we have reflected on the fact that so much of the transgression culture was re-packaged racism, misogyny, homophobia, and antisemitism which was hiding behind the transgression or edgelord persona. I think there's been a lot of reflection about what transgressive culture means. I think that was definitely a lesson for me and others.

Intentional Homage to Nazi Propaganda Posters

Charles Manson and the New Left

By Spencer Sunshine, July 6. 2026 https://spencersunshine.com/

In his 1980s neo-Nazi terrorist newsletter SIEGE, James Mason promoted worshiping Charles Manson as the new Hitler—something that was important to the book's original popularity (though not as important to Mason's followers today). Michael Moynihan, who edited a book of the same title from James Mason's original newsletters, was attracted to Mason specifically because of the Charlie angle. The book was first released in 1993, just as a huge revival of interest in Charlie was cresting, which culminated with Guns n' Roses recording one of his songs, "Look at Your Game, Girl," for their platinum (though far from their best) album *The Spaghetti Incident?*

While this is downplayed by many of those interested in Charlie, he was intensely racist and antisemitic, repeatedly stating this— not to mention that he carved a swastika on his forehead and praised Hitler! His deep misogyny, which he used to assemble and control the predominately female Family, is also overlooked. (Once he raped a young Family member while the others watched.) And all of these elements drew James Mason to him.

Nonetheless, Charlie has remained a kind of countercultural hero of sorts, and in particular the Manson Family murders had an influence on the New Left in the 1960s. At the same time as the Manson murders, internationally parts of the Left were going underground and embracing armed struggle. And these two things got mixed up together, before—at least to the more serious elements on the Left—Charlie's reactionary views became more clear.

Nonetheless, James Mason said that "Charlie bridges the gap between Left and Right," [1] and the neo-Nazi hoped to take advantage of his countercultural appeal to draw others to his vision of a rebellion against the system. At the time at least, he envisioned that this would be done simultaneously by both the Left and Right.

In addition to the counter-cultural newspaper the *L.A. Free Press*, Yippie leader Jerry Rubin took to Charlie—at least at first. Rubin said, "I fell in love with Charles Manson the first time I saw his cherub face and sparkling eyes on TV," and that "His words and courage inspired us." [2]

The most infamous embrace, however, was the Flint War Council, the last SDS meeting in December 1969. (The Students for a Democratic Society were the largest left-wing anti-Vietnam War student group in the 1960s.) It was here that the SDS leadership decided to go underground, eventually becoming known as the Weather Underground.

At the War Council, Bernardine Dohrn, one of the group's leaders, gave a speech praising the Manson Family's murder of pregnant actress Sharon Tate and four others in a wealthy Los Angeles neighborhood. "Dig it; first they killed those pigs, then they ate dinner in the room with them, then they even shoved a fork into pig Tate's stomach. Wild!" One of the chants during the meeting was "Charles Manson Power!," and members saluted each other by holding up four fingers to represent the fork. (Dohrn later called these goings-on an "ironic joke.")[3]

June 2 Movement

The German anarchist armed group the June 2nd Movement also fetishized Charles Manson; the group's founder, Michael "Bommi" Baumann, talked about these views in his autobiographical writings. In 2010, Baumann met Nikolas Schreck at a book launch in Berlin. (Schreck had been an associate of Mason and had edited the anthology *The Manson File*, which included some of Mason's work in it.) Baumann expressed admiration for the book, and later Schreck interviewed the former underground fighter. Baumann explained why he and his comrades were attracted to Charlie—partly to separate themselves from "naïve hippie" thinking, but also to take advantage of his appeal in the counter-culture. [4]

Cover of the Spurl Editions collection of SLA documents

Allegedly there was also interest from a third armed group, the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). In *The Manson File*, Schreck claimed that "Manson devotees in Northern California formed a brief liaison with the Symbionese Liberation Army in the mid-70s, planning at one point to engineer Manson's escape from prison." [5] The SLA was also said to have trained at the Wellspring commune outside of San Francisco, which was run by the "Manson Family-linked" group Tribal Thumb. [6]

It was William Pierce, however, who was most savvy to Charlie's politics and how they were received. (Pierce had been Mason's mentor in the American Nazi Party, and went on to form the National Alliance—the largest neo-Nazi group of the 1990s—and write the famous race-war fantasy novel *The Turner Diaries*.) According to Mason, Pierce said that, "The Jewish/leftist Peanut gallery that had been cheering on Manson fell silent" after he carved a swastika into his head at his trial. [7] But this was not an endorsement, and Pierce fell out with Mason after his embrace of Charlie.

Despite his rank bigotry and connections with neo-Nazis, Charlie retains an appeal to counterculturalists—and others who don't have reactionary politics but are interested in extremes—today.

ENDNOTES

[1] J. Mason, *Articles and Interviews* (2003/2018), p. 47

[2] V. Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter* (1974)

[3] H. Jacobs, ed., *Weatherman* (1970), p. 347, 481; "User Clip: Bernardine Dohrn," *CNN*, 2009

[4] N. Schreck, ed., *The Manson File* (1988), p. 141; Schreck, "Farewell to Bommi Baumann," 2016

[5] *The Manson File*, p. 141

[6] E. Frankfort, *Kathy Boudin & The Dance of Death* (1984), pp. 124, 126

[7] Mason, *Articles and Interviews*, p. 256

POLICE CAMS:For The Views

Police Body Worn Cameras are a relatively new addition to the policing arsenal.Not a direct handout from the military surplus like the urban assault vehicles, body cams snuck in from the private security sector.

Taser/Axon Enterprise was the first surveillance company to introduce the technology to the market. Police unions bulked at the idea of a wearable cop on the cop - seeing the camera as restricting the cops' ability to effectively interact with the public, protect themselves, and perform their jobs effectively. Body worn cameras sounded like oversight no one wanted.

So the marketing shifted. Prosecutor's offices were sold on the idea that the body camera offered a new source of evidence which could be used to coerce quicker guilty pleas on low level crime. The threat of video evidence would be enough incentive for most accused to accept a plea deal. A quicker plea would save the overburdened courts time while increasing guilty judgements for elected District Attorneys needing to appear tough on crime.

But even with this powerful incentive for prosecutors and courts, the police were still able to resist widespread adoption of the technology. That is until 2014.

In response to the extrajudicial execution of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, President Obama embraced body cameras including them as a feature of his 21st Century Policing Taskforce, proposing $263 million federal dollars to buy the cameras for police around the country. This was the result of a sales pitch as well. The body cam

industry targeted liberals and reformer politicians - specifically in the Obama Administration. The pitch? Their product was a tool for police transparency, oversight, and accountability which would make cops better cops and prevent bad apples from acting badly.

The police were suddenly onboard with this huge increase of federal money into their budgets. The police unions accepted it too, demanding an immediate wage increase for training, extra work, and compensation for reduction in privacy for officers. The District Attorney office spun the body camera as proof their offices were unbiased and represented all - even the "victims" of police violence.

But none of this increased accountability, protection, or transparency of police. Body cameras never offered reform. Immediately, the body camera changed police tactics. Since the camera is worn on the chest, it is easily jostled and obscured by any close contact with the cop. Police realized that this produces chaotic, unintelligible footage, which is easily manipulated and controlled.

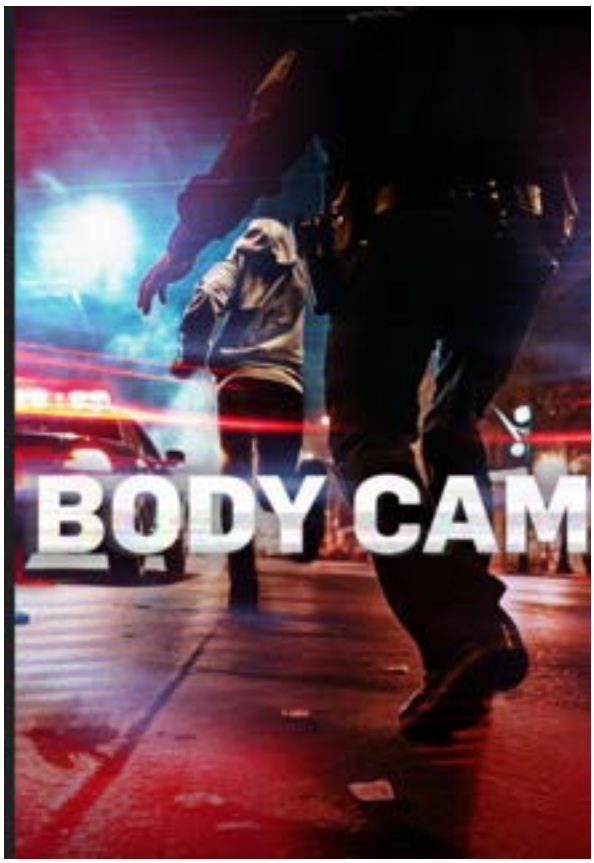
Cops started yelling commands which are clearly recorded while the video displays a violent chaos of clothing and hands. Citizens who comply with cops can be made to appear to resist or fight on the video. According to the National Policing Institute 2020 report, "Police Body Cameras: What Have We Learned Over Ten Years of Deployment?," body cameras exonerated police in 93% of the cases of alleged misconduct. Powerful new evidence, indeed.

Body camera footage is manipulatable itself. Very often after a police killing of a civilian, the body worn camera footage becomes available. But the quality of that footage is low-res, blurry, and usually totally inconclusive. And investigations and juries alike give cops a wide breadth of believability, anyway, so the blurrier the footage the better for the cop's interpretation of that video.

Yet whole documentaries can be made solely from high resolution body worn camera footage when it benefits the police's point of view. Shows like *Body Cam* and *Body Cam Cops* replaced the camera crew of

COPS with the self-directed footage of law enforcement. Documentaries like *The Perfect Neighbor* and hours of youtube/instagram/Tik Tok footage of police interactions with civilians speak to the high quality of recorded video and inherent "drama" of body worn camera footage.

The cop propaganda of these shows and social media channels is undeniable. Entertainment is only a fraction of the propaganda message though. These shows are a perfect example of how the carceral system packages every new advancement of control and surveillance, spinning them into distractions and gaudy exhibitions. Downplaying the real threat body worn cameras pose to everyday citizens, by highlighting the circus the body worn cameras record. All the easier, then, to package these surveillance tools as "reforms," which allow us to feel a renewed safety and assurance when interacting with the cops- especially after video footage of cop misconduct or murder of a civilian surfaces from the public.



The idea that body worn cameras were a demand from the public, or worse progressive reformers, is a fiction. Body worn cameras were cynically marketed, in the wake of Ferguson, as a solution to police brutality. If there was any real positive change or accountability for cops, body worn cameras wouldn't have been accepted by them. Any real reform to the carceral system from outside is denied or perverted to work against that reform. Body cameras do not make cops act differently, do not protect us from police abuse, and almost always exonerate police misconduct. If body cameras really made the cops change, no cop would be wearing one today.

INTEGRITY

INTEGRITY is not a new name to anyone within the Cleveland Straight-edge scene. In fact, INTEGRITY seems to be the foremost Cleveland Straight Edge band. INTEGRITY is made up of DIE HARD's old singer as well as DIE HARD's drummer and bass player (who plays guitar in INTEGRITY). And rounding out the line-up the bass player from CONFRONT now free to pursue this band full time since they called it quits. Needless to say this group of seasoned musicians cranks out some of the hardest and most powerful Straight Edge hardcore EVER!

The band's songs lyrically deal with vegetarianism and the needless slaughter of animals, as well as sticking with any commitment you make for your entire life. Musically the band has tried to achieve a higher level of hardcore, trying to break free of all generalities that is so common in other Straight Edge bands. INTEGRITY has not jumped on any bandwagon and their musical commitment shows their dedication to the movement.

INTEGRITY's influences include such greats as Judge, Cro-Mags, Underdog, Straight Ahead, Side By Side, Project X, Gorilla Biscuits, Negative Approach, Suicidal Tendencies.

INTEGRITY has fused all these bands into a potent and effective new and fresh breed of straight Edge music.

INTEGRITY is the cutting edge and the future of straight edge!

The band is:

CHUBBIE FRESH - *DRUMS*
TOM FRONT - *BASS*
the A-DOUBLE - *GUITAR*
JOHN INTEG - *VOICE*

Biography
by John Piche'
of
No Exit
zine

RINGING IT BACK FOR CLEVELAND STRAIGHT-EDGE

NEIGHB
FIGHTIN
ZINE

NEIGHBOR ZINE

THE FIGHTING ZINE

ISSUE #00001

My first zine was *No Exit*, which I did with Alejandro de Acosta in 1990. It featured the first ever interview with Dwid and Aaron, conducted in a Cleveland Heights 76 gas station, about their new band, INTEGRITY.

I've been returning to zines every ten years or so since then. Sorry for the delay. NEIGHBOR, as a title, is an in-joke. Where some people only saw me as the Melnicks neighbor despite all else.

My goal with NEIGHBOR is to include authors, artists, and musicians from the Cleveland Hardcore scene. As well as interviews exploring the existential threat cop culture, alt-right nutsees, and other white christian nationalists pose to underground and alternative scenes. We live in stupid times.

In this issue: The Aaron Melnick interview I did in 2024 for *Razorcake*. I don't feel it got enough attention, plus NUCLAE is on the verge of releasing new music. And Aaron spent the summer playing with INTEGRITY, INMATES, and FINAL AGONY. Maybe you saw a show? Lemme know.

Spencer Sunshine is the author of a book, Neo-Nazi Terrorism and Countercultural Fascism: The Origins and Afterlife of James Mason's Siege, about the neo-Nazis in the *Abraxas Foundation* centered around Boyd Rice and Charles Manson. It was a big problem, then, and remains a huge problem today. I interviewed him in 2025. Additionally, I've included a short piece by Sunshine called, "Charles Manson and the New Left."

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Editorial No. 1 : OLD MAN COMPLAINTS

I get hit a lot. Still. Even though I quit drinking at the turn of the century, I still get hit. A lot. Never by fists, at least not ones intentionally aimed at me anymore. Rather I get hit by things thrown or launched or otherwise spun into the air.

Here are three incidents in a much longer list of direct hits:

1. I was standing near a metal support beam at a basement show in Kent. This was years ago. When a beer bottle exploded next to my face. I saw it coming. Just like a drawing of an anarchist launched Molotov Cocktail it soared right at me. I moved my head, just enough, that it missed me but still hit the pole. How I was not injured by that burst of glass I do not question. Especially, with the littlest effort I put into self-preservation.

2. I was standing near the merch table during an INMATES show. Paul threw a full can of beer. He arched it over the heads of most of the crowd, but with perfect precision to thud into the front of my shoulder. Dead eye dick with his random aim. Again, I saw it spiral toward me in slow motion and was able to twist enough away that it didn't hit my chest or chin. I threw it back and missed Paul but hit some tall kid in the back instead. Aside from being covered in cheap beer, I was slightly bruised near my armpit.

3. Most recently, at the Grog Shop, I stood in the little alcove of benches, jealously marveling at the windmill kick acrobatics that some young man learned in his GYMBOREE class, when I felt a soft punch in the middle of my chest. I looked around for someone who could throw such a friendly punch, but instead discovered a NIKE AIR SOMEGUY shoe in front of me. I picked it up. A curly haired muppet popped out of the crowd to claim it. Later he came up to me and apologized. In response, I did the most embarrassing thing I could have done. I looked him dead in the eyes and scolded, "If you're going to dance around like that, tie your fucking shoe laces."

So in summation, if you see me at a show, please don't throw your beer at me. Drink it instead.

Aaron Melnick is a frustrating person to know, because he is always moving forward - always pushing himself into new projects; always teaching himself something with a passion and commitment that few in Cleveland have innately. Cleveland punk and hardcore is made by cheap matches thrown on dry kindling. Sure, there is a spectacularly bright explosion of intense fire, but it burns itself up and out too quickly. The stakes are low, so the drama is high as Cleveland eats its own. But Aaron fits into a lineage of caretakers. He supports, encourages, and lends a hand more than others rip at the seams. With each new interest, new band, and project Aaron tackles them with authentic sincerity. His newest project, Nuclae, supports a band and a novel, his first, to complete a multi-decade project inspired by a late night conversation. Now that it is out, what comes next? Luckily, we will all get to enjoy whatever comes next.

AARON MELNICK

JOHN PICHE: A Double. How did you get into punk as a young kid?
AARON MELNICK: Well, lemme think. I mean, you were there for a lot of it. Well, I moved to England with my family in 1982, 1983. I did sixth grade there. Every Sunday night, we would watch Top of the Pops and back then they would have Siouxsie and the Banshees and Bauhaus and stuff like that. So I got exposed to some different sorts of music. When we moved back to Cleveland, I discovered college radio. College Radio in Cleveland (Stations like WRUW and WCSB) is really amazing because every show is different. I gravitated more toward post-Punk at first and some hardcore, I remember the first time I heard Joy Division on one WRUW, and it blew my mind. They played "Heart and Soul" and "New Dawn Fades," I was just blown away at the power of the emotion.
JOHN: I just remember that orange dictation cassette player used to carry around.
AARON: Yeah, I painted it orange.
JOHN: All you played on it was Tears for Fears and that it was annoying, like you had a personal soundtrack.
AARON: Yeah. (laughs)
JOHN: The moodier stuff seemed to really draw you in. What do you think drew you to that initially versus the poppier English bands? You know what I mean? That moodier, sadder, depressive music was the entry drug, right?

AARON: Yeah. I don't know. I think when I moved back from England, it was a weird time because I gravitated toward looking a little different, maybe not punk, but I bleached my hair and wore some weird clothes, ripped up jeans and stuff. The way I dressed was license for people to fuck with me for sure. When I moved back, I liked this weird music and that was the most important thing to me. So I felt a little ostracized from old friends. And then to compound that I went even deeper. Tears for Fears - What did you call them? The gateway drug? Is that what you said?

JOHN: Yeah.

AARON: Tears for Fears is the gateway drug for Joy Division. (laughs) Especially, *The Hurting*, you know what I mean? (laughs)

John: *The Hurting* is an amazing album, but it's unrelentingly depressing every song.

Aaron: There's some higher points in it, but most of the big songs are pretty down. But yes, it's dark, it's dark, for sure. I liked that. I mean you can see going from that to Joy Division to metal. Joy Division are a metal band in a way, I might get skewered for saying that. (laughs) But that mix of New Wave and Metal - the guitar, it's very simple, it's like Sabbath. Anyway, once I found college radio, I started hearing about shows. My first hardcore show was a Toxic Reasons and Government Issue, and that was really cool. I was fourteen or fifteen.

JOHN: By dressing a certain way and listening to a certain type of music, it was a key that unlocked a group of people, a scene. And I wonder what that scene was when you first entered it and then how it developed over time. You know what I mean?

AARON: Yeah, so at first it was pretty local. I grew up in Cleveland Heights, which is on the east side of Cleveland. And there was this place called Coventry which on Friday nights you could see a hundred punk people hanging out, maybe more sometimes honestly. It was this mixture of old hippies, punks and alternative kids, whatever you want to say. Back then the labels weren't as clearly defined. We were all just into this counterculture. So I got to meet a lot of people at Coventry. I want to say, if we just step back a second, Anya (Aaron's older sister) dated this guy Dave Araca (The Guns, False Hope, Integrity), about the same time I started going to shows and listening to college radio. I think I was probably fourteen, I don't remember the exact year.

JOHN: He was still in The Guns. They were still playing out.

AARON: Yeah, he was still in The Guns, who are one of the greatest hardcore bands from Cleveland or anywhere else. They never got the credit because they stayed local. They never played anywhere else (outside of Ohio). They started when they were twelve and thirteen years old. I think when they played their first show, they had to sneak into the club to play. (laughs) So in my opinion, they were national talent level, hardcore. I mean, the song "I'm Not Right" is one of the best hardcore songs ever written in my opinion. Anyway, Dave introduced me to different kinds of music. He gave me a *Hell Awaits* cassette and that blew my mind. He turned me on to a lot of music for sure. Although I did hear Peace Corpse's "Quincy's Lament" on the radio, that was the first hardcore song I ever heard.

JOHN: I remember I was outside watering the front lawn or something, and he was driving by, I think he was going to pick your sister up, and he pulled into my driveway and I just knew him from hanging out with you guys. Anyway, he pulls in, he goes, "John, get in my car." And I got in and he was like, listen to this. And he played me Rich Kids On LSD.

AARON: Shit. (laughs)

JOHN: And I was just like, "Holy God, what is this?" He's like, "I'll make you a tape. Alright, I got to go." And then kicked me out of his car. He was one of those guys that was constantly exploring and

sharing and passing the message on. I was just standing in my front yard and he pulls in and he was like, "Hey kid, you want to hear some crazy shit?" (laughs)
AARON: Yeah, I mean, it's pretty awesome to be like that. I think I try to be like that. Really, everyone does that to a certain extent.
JOHN: I remember in high school we would jam, right? People would just drag their amps over and play in the basements after school. How do you think that formed your musical journey?
AARON: Well, first of all, it allowed me to see that anyone can make music regardless of talent level. Especially when first starting out, I think it matters less how good you are at your instrument and more how much emotion you could put in your instrument. Seeing all this different stuff happening, all these different bands and different styles of music - there was quite an amalgamation of styles. Especially in early hardcore, every band had their own style. Everything sounded crazy. You know what I mean? I liked that each band had a personality and even locally each band was different. So we were in a scene under False Hope. They kind of led the scene, but then there was Confront and Outface and Hyper As Hell, Domestic Crisis, all these bands had their own vibe and their own sound. It was totally different. And then when your favorite band, Ugly But Proud would come to town, I loved that they didn't sound like everybody else either. It was a really cool time. I just felt like my purpose was to make music.

JOHN: I'm going to jump ahead to skipping over Common Sense - Die Hard - Integrity progression. I want to focus on the Integrity piece of it all. I've always been interested in this: you were in one of the most infamous bands, known for some fabled, legendary drama thirty years ago. Some of it happened, some of it didn't. (both laugh) But you managed to stay removed from all that drama and everyone was always fairly cool with you. And even when people would show up to fight, they would say to you, "I don't have any problem with you. I'm here to fight him."
AARON: Oh, yeah. (laughs)
JOHN: But what was it really like being in Integrity? Really like living in Integrity and dealing with that drama and your shows always had the potential of violence against the band. It took the violence out of the pit and put it on the band itself.
AARON: Well, the pit was pretty violent too, I think. I don't know. I mean, I was kind of embroiled in it a little bit. It was kind of exciting, as a kid, honestly, to be part of it. But at the same time, I'm not someone who's going to...how do I say this? I like being cool with people, and as long as I think they're cool, I'm going to be cool with them. I think we have more in common than we don't have in common. So this is an interesting question to answer because yes, it's true that, Integrity started off kind of as a straight edge band and then quickly morphed into kind of a nihilistic, drugged out, band. (laughing) That caused some problems, know what I mean?
JOHN: There were a lot of drugs...(laughing)
AARON: Almost like the movie *Altered States* or something, we went through our phases, obviously, but I don't know, definitely crazy things happened.
JOHN: How did you feel about the band having that reputation, being a part of that energy? You were writing this amazing music, arguably changing hardcore and instead, this reputation forms around the drama - are they straight edge? Aren't they straight edge? Are they tough guys, etc.
AARON: We were pretty crazy. (laughing)

JOHN: It must've been exhausting to live in a world where you couldn't just play the music, yet at the same time you were benefiting from the infamy.
AARON: Yeah, I don't know. I think that's what makes Integrity - (empathizes) *Integrity*. Especially early, Nineties Integrity. It's both of those things. Yes, for me it was more always about the music and I just wanted to play songs that I wrote that I loved playing. But there was an excitement value from that other stuff. Let's admit it, when you go to a hardcore show, its exciting because it's dangerous. Even if you're in a scene where there's no drama happening and you have no beef with anybody - there's still this potential. If you're near the pit, it can be scary. To get back to the original point, that didn't bother me at the time. Maybe later on it did. Toward the end of my time in Integrity, I was starting to tire of it maybe. I was getting a little older and didn't really care about the excitement as much. There were other reasons that it was over for me, too. At first though, I didn't really mind too much. Sometimes it'd be a little excessive and I'd be like, "Oh my God, this is ridiculous." But a lot of times it was like, "Wow, that's pretty crazy." I know maybe I didn't have much of a sense...I don't know what the right word is, but I feel like there was a time in my life it was every man for himself. That was my attitude. It was kind of cold, I have to say. Honestly, I'm not saying that I'm proud of that, but also, it's just the reality of how it was for me. And you could probably hear that in the music, too.

JOHN: You definitely went through a period of being a scrawny goth kid. What did they call you? Bleach Boy?
AARON: Did they call me that? I don't remember. Did you just make that up, right now, to crack?
JOHN: No. I'm going to ask your mom. I think someone did call you "Bleach Boy." (both laughing) When did you start getting into fitness and working out? Was Rollins the main inspiration?
AARON: I don't know, really. I mean, there were definitely these muscular, tough guys around. I thought they looked tough, so I assumed they could fight. People don't fuck with them, I thought. Bands like Cro-Mags looked like hard asses, some of them anyway, Rollins, Suicidal, some of that macho looking stuff…but I think because I was a scrawny shorter guy, I probably weighed one hundred and twenty pounds when I was a freshman in high school, and people would fuck with me. I was like, okay, well, I want to change this. So I started lifting weights. I started taking kung fu. It was a self-protection thing, honestly, to tell you the truth. It's kind of a metamorphosis a bit too. It made me feel good about myself. Working out and staying in shape became a lifelong thing for me. I still work out to this day. Plus back then, you definitely would get static and just being that age, I think you're going to get static no matter what your social group is, but also if you look a little crazier, people are going to gravitate towards fucking with you. I remember there were shows at Knights of Columbus Hall, and this was in Mayfield Heights, where there was a lot of jockish, machismo type stuff. And jocks or whatever would drive by and yell slurs at us. It was constant. People would heckle, yell the stupidest shit and threaten to fight you, you remember? Now people are more accepting of the diversity, I feel like. Which is good.
JOHN: Yeah, it's good. I want to talk about the Cleveland scene you came up in because Integrity joined a solid scene with other bands Outface, False Hope...
AARON: They were kind of like the generation directly preceding us. We were part of that scene, but Integrity was the next wave, we were the new thing. You know what I mean?
JOHN: How do you think that scene helped the band or hurt the band? What was your interaction with those other bands like Domestic Crisis or Eddie Munster Head?
AARON: Yeah, especially early on, we started a little later than most of those bands. We were in that generation, in terms of being the same age and stuff. Everyone started bands when they were 16, and my bands maybe didn't get as much traction until Integrity. I mean, everyone loved False Hope. They were

heavy, they were exciting to watch. Definitely they were into it. They had a scene of probably thirty or forty people. They became bigger toward the end of their career, but they were definitely an example of professionalism to strive towards Outface as well. Outface were extremely tight, and they set the bar very high in terms of their performance. And they were just good. They were good players. And Confront was cool because they kind of came out of left field. They were straight edge and they were just more simple, hardcore, a bit of a throwback. There were other good bands, but those were the big three for the kids on the east side. That False Hope scene. So yeah, that definitely influenced me in terms of how to attain a level of professionalism, what works and what doesn't work, things like that.

JOHN: You once mentioned to me that Chris Smith (False Hope, Keelhaul, Integrity, Inmates) taught you what it means to be in a band.

AARON: Yeah. Chris, he was someone I looked up to. I still kind of look up to, well, I have to look up to him since he's really tall. (laughing) But especially back then when I was younger he was kind of an older brother figure. Plus I would say he was the leader of False Hope, or at least as much as a band can have a leader. I don't know. I mean, he was the force that drove it forward. And usually a lot of times the song writer will be that force because they have a vision, and then the rest of the members, you count on them to help realize that vision. And then not only that, also, there's a level of professionalism. You don't want to just accept the first take that you do in the studio. Just accept anything. There haven't been too many shows in my life where I've been like, "Wow, we fucked up. That sucked." And the reason is because I'm not usually willing to go out there with people that I don't feel can do it. I mean, that matters. That matters. The amount of practice you do, stuff like that, that's important. I like to have a lot of practice. What else? There's so many aspects to being in a band. When I was in Integrity, I didn't maybe see all the aspects because Dwid did a lot of it, but I feel like me and Dwid had complimentary skills - I would write music, he would write lyrics. I would do stuff like rent the vans and do a lot of the driving but he would book the shows. You know what I mean? Of course there's other people doing stuff. I'm not trying to take away from anybody else. But I mean, if everyone is driven to create and make something, I think that's what makes for a successful band. And later on, Chris Smith joined for a couple of years, and that was really cool to get him into Integrity. I forget if he's the right or left speaker on *Those Who Fear Tomorrow*, but his rhythm guitar is really amazing. Whatever the speaker, it's the louder guitar. And he was playing out of a Marshall. And I think that lends a lot of the flavor of *Those Who Fear Tomorrow*. Lenny's obviously heavily featured in that record...

JOHN: Best bass player since Lemmy.

AARON: Yes. (laughs)

JOHN: Right. Integrity went from basically being a sticker band to having a seven inch in a very short period of time.

AARON: Well yeah, I'd been in this band Die Hard, and Dwid was the singer, and then Dwid wasn't the singer, and this dude, Stork (brother of Paul Shlachter of Inmates, Noncommercial Records, Brainwashed Youth,

Meanstreak) was the singer. I played bass in Die Hard. I played bass because that's what they would let me play. But I really wanted to play guitar. I love guitar and I still love guitar, but I really loved guitar back then. I really wanted to play guitar in a band. So me and Tom Brose from Confront started writing songs in my basement. We would lift weights and we'd be tough, and then we'd say "let's write a tough song." (laughs) We wrote those first three songs which became the Integrity *Demo* - "Bringing It Back," "Live It Down," and "Dead Wrong." Those were the three tough songs we wrote together. (laughs) Dwid was looking for a band. It's strange how it happened because Tony Pines was the drummer in Die Hard, and we were basically like, "Tony, will play drums for us?" We didn't know anyone else who wanted to play drums for us. (laughing) So he played on the demo. I think those three songs were recorded at the end of the Die Hard recording session at Mars. So that's how the first three Integrity songs were recorded at Mars Recording Studios. Mars recorded all the stuff that I ever did back then with Integrity. And Bill Korecky (owner of Mars) did the second False Hope demo. Bill did some really, really great stuff. He did the Confront, he did False Hope. He did Outface.

JOHN: He did everybody in Cleveland, essentially.

AARON: He recorded everyone in Cleveland. Yeah. We recorded it in just one day. We just laid 'em down real quick. I doubled the guitars. I put a couple dive bombs on there. (laughing) I think I played a solo in "Dead Wrong." It's the only solo. I think there's a solo in there. I haven't listened to that song in so long, I don't remember, but it sounded really cool. (laughs) Chris Smith heard that demo and said he enjoyed it and thought it was really good. That made me proud and that made me happy. Somehow Tony Brummel (Victory Records) got a hold of the demo. I'm not sure how he got ahold of it, but he sent us a letter. I remember getting the letter and it said he wanted to put out a seven inch with us. So we went back to Mars and recorded that seven inch.

That was the difference, people tended to take you more seriously if you had vinyl out. So that's how that Integrity seven inch came about.

JOHN: You definitely made a mark, obviously, and it's a great seven inch, and I don't want to get into all that Victory drama. I want to talk about today. When I listen to hardcore bands especially, and sometimes metal, I get to a part in a song and I'm like, "That's an Aaron part." I don't know if you understand the influence your style has had on punk and hardcore and metal, and what do you think of that influence? And do you hear it too when you're listening to bands?

AARON: It's funny. (pauses) I'm in this other band, Final Agony and we played the FYA Fest a few weeks ago. And I saw some really good bands. I was watching this other band, I don't even remember what they're called, but they had this part and I was like, whoa, this part is fucking cool. I really liked this, I'm going to figure this out. As I was playing it out on my guitar, once I figured it out, I realized that it was "Vocal Test," with just like a little hitch thrown in there. I don't always hear it, honestly. It's pretty crazy. I think it's cool. I'm part of this lineage that got handed to me, and then I handed it to other people and it is still going on. I think it's really awesome.
JOHN: Yeah, I read an interview and someone said, "Aaron Melnick is my favorite guitar player." Yeah, that's right. He should be.

AARON: I don't know about that. (laughs)
JOHN: So when we've been talking a lot about the past, aside from getting older and stopping hanging out every night, and the perspective that life brings, what is important to you about still making this music, still playing out in dive bars and fests? Why do you keep doing it?
AARON: I enjoy it! Plain and simple. I love playing. I think it's fun. It feels good. It sounds good. It's cool like playing that FYA fest the other day. It was cool to look out and see people dancing to the music and stuff and that, but I do it for myself more than anybody else. If other people like it, that's really cool too. But for me, it's a way to express myself. I don't know if there's a deeper reason, but it seems like it's what I'm meant to do. It's my purpose.
JOHN: And it's fun connecting the dots. Like Dave Araca and the older kids brought us in, it is now our responsibility, too.
AARON: There's a natural inclination, I think, to feel threatened by the next generation. And you could see it in so many different scenes everywhere. I know Radio Birdman didn't like The Saints, so they felt threatened by The Saints, but it's part of the natural progression and it's good. Everything is more intense, the more brutal, hardcore bands are more brutal. Guitar sounds are more powerful. I mean, production values have gotten better.
JOHN: When you started recording and playing music, you had that little gorilla practice amp. How has technology changed in the time you've been using it? And what does it do for making the music you make? Is it easier? Is it more challenging? Is it, I mean, because you went from Rap Arts (after school center for troubled youth that had a makeshift recording studio) to Rob Orr's (Unreal City, Integrity) studio, right?
AARON: You can hear your sonic vision quickly and hear what works. It makes it so much easier, honestly, nowadays with the quality you can get at home. Nuclae was actually recorded in the Sanderson Photography Studio, it was a huge room. Rob has really great equipment, he spent some money on his equipment. He actually has stuff from Mars. He has one channel from Mars, one with preamps in it. But yes, going back to Rap Arts, I remember the recording, if you listen to that Die Hard demo, which we released as, *"Die Hard - Off the Bat" demo*. I think you can hear the bass and drums in one speaker, and the other speaker has guitar and vocals. That's called High Fidelity. So that's where we started. Back in the 1990s, I bought the shittest 4-track and it was expensive for me, it was three hundred and fifty dollars. It was called a Fostex X 18. Maybe there's a little bit shittier one. (laughing) When I got that it was a big piece of equipment for me. I wrote a lot of Integrity songs on that thing, and I would just write, I would experiment with it. If you heard some of the original versions of stuff like "Armenian Persecution" is on

piano. The original version of "Search for Divinity" is an acoustic song. You know what I mean? Some of the songs started really funny on there and then became Integrity songs.

JOHN: *Bringing Out The Beast* is both the title of your first novel and a new album by your new band. Can you tell us about those projects, how they originated and how they're related?

AARON: Well, *Bringing Out the Beast*, the book started with the conversation I had with this dude John Piche, an old friend of mine, probably in 1999 maybe. Yeah, probably when me and John Piche lived together. We had a conversation one night, we were just talking about sci-fi ideas and you said, "What if you had a drug that was sentient and you tell the story from point of view from the drug?" It kind of blew my mind. I was like, "Wow." I had just seen *Island of Dr. Moreau* or something, and I wanted to add the idea of genetic modification to the story. In any case, I started writing the story. I started writing it with a pencil in this big hardbound lined notebook I had. I carried a little book around with me everywhere I went. Whenever I had an idea, I'd write in this little book. I typed out an early version and I sent it to my friend, Bill Gill. He liked it and had some suggestions. He was the first person to read it and also gave me encouragement. Then I think my sister read it. You read it a couple times and it kept changing. But at the core it was...If you've ever been addicted to anything and I've had some issues with addiction, you have this voice in your head that tells you it's okay. Just do one more. Just do it one more time. You're okay. You should do more. Even with nicotine, which is actually one of the strongest addictions there is, actually. Maybe you don't have this, but I have this, you're almost talking to yourself but it is your addiction talking to you. It's like, go ahead, just pour another cup of coffee so then you can light that cigarette. It's going to taste so good. You know what I mean? I started exploring that voice more and more. I feel like I've saved myself. Fitness and nature and stuff like that helped me a lot. I wanted to show a little hope in this book. Although the book is pretty dark, it's not a feel good book. Also at the same time, I've continued to write songs and some of these songs relate to the novel's story.

JOHN: So Nuclae's *Bringing Out The Beast* is a concept album for the book, or are they not directly related?

AARON: They're related. Actually in the book there are songs almost like *Lord of the Rings*, when Tolkien placed songs at climactic points. Not every song in the book is a song on the album, but there's a lot of song lyrics in both. There is a group of people in the book who have a library of songs recording their history. Inspired by the Roma and the Jews and the Moors as well, when they were all persecuted by the Spanish, they came up with flamenco music. Or how early hardcore was a response to Ronald Reagan's conservatism. I wanted to portray that in the book and the album.

JOHN: But what is the book about? So it has this basic premise of there's a sentient drug, and then what was your elevator pitch for the book?

AARON: The book is a Sci Fi dystopian vision of the future. There's a group of people that augment their DNA to remain competitive in the hyper industrialization of mechanization and robotics. These DNA altered people are basically a counterculture and they are called The Nuclae. Then there's this addict, he's addicted to that drug that has its own sentience within his head. He has to go on the run and he enters the underground world of the Nuclae. But the powerful interests after the addict will stop at nothing to get a hold of him.

JOHN: Was the creative process different when approaching the music and book?

AARON: Well, I've been writing music my whole life, I guess I've been writing my whole life, but not writing a novel. So songs are a little bit easier to write for me. And I play riffs until I find something that I like and then I put 'em together. If they don't work, I try something else. So the music came a lot easier to me. Writing that book is one of the hardest things I've ever done because while you're writing it, you're like, "Shit, if this happens, then I have to go back to this part 40 pages ago because that means that I have to change this." And for someone like me, I was all over the fucking place, man, it was difficult to keep

organized. That was one of the hardest things, finding the time to write this thing. And towards the end, I was talking to Dwid and he asked if I was almost done with the book. I told him I was almost done, but there were so many little things to do and I never had time. He told me, "You should just stop doing anything else. Put everything else on hold and just finish it." And that was actually really good advice. It took me maybe three days or something, I just sat down and I did nothing else for three days. I did have to go back and do some edits after that. But that's how I finished the book. Honestly, it was one of the hardest things I've ever done. Now I think I'm going to apply that to songwriting. I have started to do that. I've already started writing another Nuclae record and I am thinking about writing another book. Although this next book I think would be more about hardcore. So maybe the next Nuclae album might be more hardcore. I'll see where it goes.

JOHN: I know the book's only been out a couple of weeks at this point, but what's the reaction been? What was your expectation?

AARON: Well, the experience of putting music out is pretty quick. You know if people like it or think you suck. You know what I mean? But the experience of putting out a book, I am asking more of the audience. I'm trusting them with something that I created with my thoughts and words. A book is a bit more concrete. I'm trusting the audience more. Everybody who has read it so far has said that they really liked it. I didn't know it would be so long because when I wrote it on Google Docs it was one hundred and ninety pages, so I thought, it's gonna be like two hundred pages. I wanted to keep it short. So when it came back four hundred and thirteen pages, I was like, holy shit, that's a lot to ask for someone. Even if you're not into science fiction, I tried to model it on Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. That's one of my favorite science fiction books. I love that book. And I feel like that book is social commentary. It's fiction commentary. I mean, it was just how he saw his world. I mean, you could tell there's real shit in there. And I feel like my book is similar. I'm not saying that my book is as good by any stretch of the imagination.

JOHN: It's not. (both laughing)

AARON: But my book, I feel is honest. How I strived to be like Slayer when I started Integrity. I strive to be like Huxley.

JOHN: I want to talk about the new band Nuclae. How has your songwriting changed since the Die Hard days?

AARON: Yeah, well, I guess I graduated from two minute songs to three minute songs, so that was an accomplishment. But yeah, I don't know. The music is still pretty much standard, heavy, hardcore. It's very similar to Integrity. Somebody told me that it could be Integrity's sixth album or something, which was funny. (laughing) That could be kind of accurate. I even have Dwid on it, he sings the song "Hell Hollow." My last album with Integrity was *Seasons in the Size of Days*. We were starting to be a little more experimental, a little more eclectic. And this is kind of similar to that.

JOHN: You're a musician. You painted the cover of the book. You're an author now, you're a mushroom hunter, teacher, filmmaker who made some of my favorite movies. And I'm going to start referring to you as my friend Aaron "Multi-instrumentalist" Melnick. What projects would you still like to accomplish, creatively and personally?

AARON: Well, I still have this dream of doing an animated version of the novel, like an *Akira* type version of my novel. I don't think I can do animation that well. I know I could probably learn how to do that, and I would actually like to do that, but I do have a career separate from all this, I don't have that much time. (laughs) But that's one thing I would love to do. I have made

some shorter movies, I guess you could call 'em, but I would like to make a live action film. I love art. So I've tried to dabble. I've done sculpture. I'm always trying to learn some new skill. I might not master any of 'em, but I like to learn a lot of new things. I think that's really cool to incorporate new things into your art that you're into at that time - a new style or a new phase. Maybe the stuff that I do is not such a dramatic reinvention of myself, but I feel like every recording I've ever done is, there are no recordings that sound that much alike. You know what I mean? Even in Integrity, all the four LPs that I was involved in, they all are totally different. *Systems Overload* is hardcore. *Those Who Fear Tomorrow* was inspired by eighties metal. That's not very climactic, but that answers it. I would love to do some more shows with Nuclae. That'd be awesome. So if you want to book us, hit me up.

JOHN: Well, when I interviewed you in 1989 in a Sunoco gas station, I asked as a final question, "Do you have any final thoughts?" Do you remember what you said?

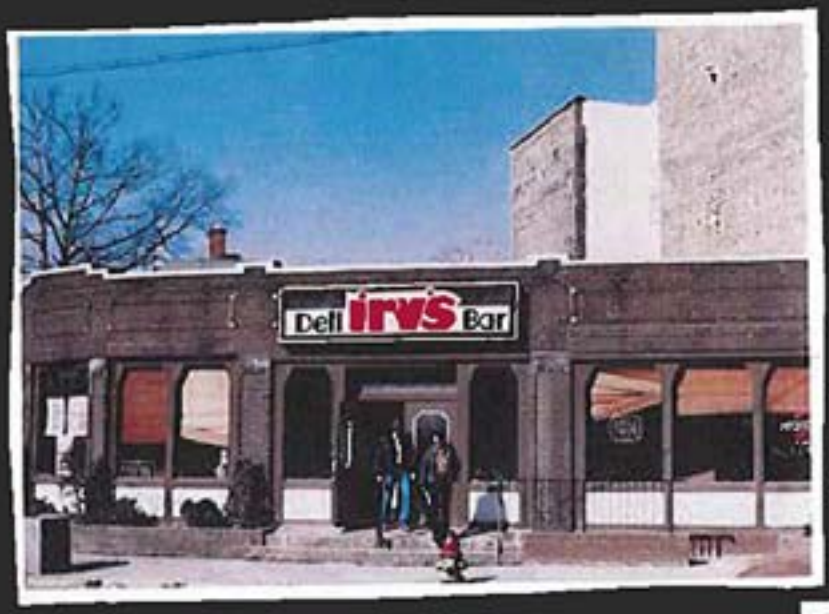
AARON: Yeah, I remember exactly what I said. And I still think that, "When you give up your dreams, you die."

The Bringing Out the Beast vinyl and t-shirt at Rebirth Records https://rebirthrecords.bigcartel.com/ Bringing Out the Beast novel is available through Aaron or Amazon. Aaron can be reached at https://www.instagram.com/_nuclae_/

Aaron, Me, Pete 1987

HARDCORE PICTURE PAGES COLORING TIME!!

THE DAY NYHC CAME TO CLEVELAND HEIGHTS



The thing about Coventry back in the day is that it ran on drugs. Weed, cocaine, pills, alkahaul.

Countercultural, drugged up hippies, schizophrenic burnouts from rich families, Hell's Angels bikers, and a loose assortment of punks and baby winos.

There was a malevolence on the street, a dark and mean and filthy exploitative shadow…

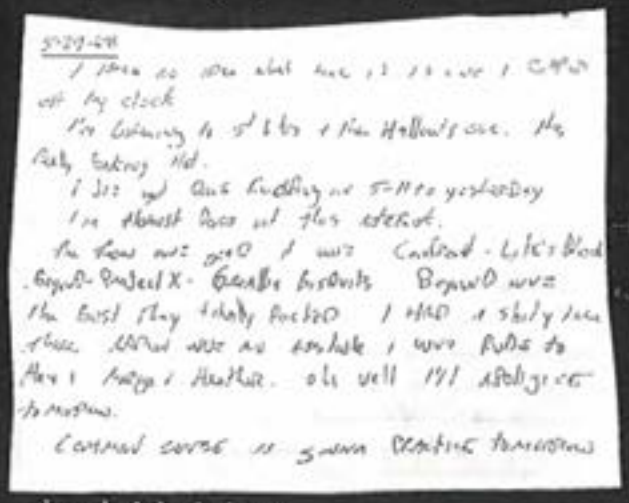
Irv's was a den of scum and villany and how Tom Front got them to agree to a hardcore show in the middle of Sunday afternoon attests to the weirdness of Coventry and the age we lived in.

May 29, 1988 around about 2 pm.

The punks walked toward Irv's Deli. Some beat up van held together by stickers trolled around the block looking for a parking spot. The sun was out, making the mild day feel hotter, I wore jeans which would come to misery once inside the sweaty airless side room of the deli. I stood on the pavement as Alex walked down Coventry, boots clipping, his cut off jeans and winter hat both looking damp. He collapsed on the sidewalk to tie his boot lace, but having just walked the five miles from his Shaker home to Hampshire Road must have taken a few hours off his life. He was understandably tired, hot, and cranky.

While we debated a pop from Carroll Drug, a van creaked to a stop next to us. Some kid fell out the side, and asked if a hardcore show was happening here today. This turned out to be Life's Blood, a last minute addition to the already packed bill. I later bought a seven inch from that same kid, who was sitting at the back of that van putting stuff away. He had to dig it out, since they were on the verge of leaving. Last minute, I got one of the best hardcore 7 inches ever recorded.

I remember a few other things from the show. I went to pee just as Porcell and gang busted into the first Project X song. By the time I got back to my spot near the back, Porcell thanked everyone for coming out. I totally missed their five song set.



The other thing was just how hot it was inside Irv's. My guess is that he didn't have air conditioning. I am not sure I remember punk shows having air conditioning until the late 1990s.

Tom Front worked the door, probably pretty flushed, as he collected out damp sock dollars. All us cornfed Midwest bumbkins still moshed in a circle pit. Like we learned from our crusty ancestors and *Another State of Mind*. The New York Crew had started *dancing hard* and mocked us viciously. Not me, though, I don't dance.

After the show and hanging out a bit, I walked back to 2622 Princeton Road, probably with Alex. Perhaps bickering the whole time about which band was the best.

At the time, it was just what we did. Looking back on it, the historical nature of it, seeing all those bands on one bill, in a small room, it takes on a legendary hue. But these shows are still being scrapped together, in parking lots and warehouse loading docks. Go to every one, because forty years from now, some kid will want to hear all about it.

Aaron, Dwid, Brian from Confront in purple, Project X John

SPENCER SUNSHINE

Countercultural Fascism

JOHN PICHE: So if you'd introduce yourself and kind of give us a background of who you are.

SPENCER SUNSHINE: Sure. My name is Spencer Sunshine. I hold a Ph.D. in sociology. I've researched and written about the far right for 20 years now, which is a little shocking. I've written for a bunch of different academic and popular publications. And most recently, I had a book come out last year on Routledge. It took me five years to research and write. It's called Neo-Nazi Terrorism and Countercultural Fascism. The Origins and Afterlife of James Mason's Siege.

JOHN: How did you get into this work researching the far right and how, then, did you discover the James Mason material? Because it seems you had fantastic access to the Mason archive.

SPENCER: Like so many people of my generation, it was through conflicts with Nazi skinheads. I grew up in a small town in Georgia just outside of Atlanta. My friends and I would go to punk shows in Atlanta. So I was going to Atlanta shows, maybe 1988 to 1991. At that time, the city was overrun by Nazi skinhead groups. In fact, the Nazi skins were the only organized political faction in the punk scene. To counter them, we ended up founding, I guess today would be labeled, an anti-fascist group to combat that Nazi presence and to actively push back against them. We were helped and encouraged by a group of adults who were doing grassroots community work around anti-racist and anti-hate in a more organized way. Through the association with them we learned a lot about the white supremacist movement.

As time went on, I got into more regular political work in the mid-2000s. I encountered a group of crypto-fascists cross recruiting in the anti-globalization, radical ecologist, anarchist movements. I wrote an article exposing them. My interest grew and I started focusing on anti-Semitism, particularly on the Left. As I did more and more research on these hate groups it basically just spiraled. After I finished my doctorate I was tapped to work as a fellow at a think tank. Then Trump was elected, the first time around, and everything exploded.

JOHN: Yeah. And I think a lot of people were surprised by the racist, white power explosion after Trump was elected. But as someone who's connected to the punk/underground music scenes as we were in the 1980 and 1990s, it wasn't a huge shock. Nazi skinheads have been a consistent threat. But James Mason and your research into this book demonstrate how these racist, hate groups amplified their voice and how they've maintained their presence. Could you begin by telling us the history you discovered of this neo-Nazi fascist movement and how James Mason fit into that movement?

SPENCER: Sure. James Mason is this neo-Nazi terrorist ideologue. He joined the American Nazi Party at age fourteen in 1966. So he is a lifer in the American Nazi movement. He is thoroughly committed to it. It's his life's work. He wrote a book. It's an anthology of his newsletter called *SIEGE*. This book was edited by Michael Moynihan (author of Lords of Chaos).

In this book, Mason says that there's no point in National Socialists doing any kind of traditional or legal political organizing. No point in having rallies. No point in forming organizations, making propaganda, almost any of these things. Instead, what Nazis should do is engage in dramatic and public acts of violence in the hope that these acts will contribute to the destabilization of society and the government. After this destabilization, and only after this, will neo-Nazis will have a chance of seizing power. I do think he's right in his perspective that there are no vested interests of society who want a neo-Nazi party to gain open power. I think he's not wrong in this, but it's a fuzzy headed idea. The book came out in 1993. When it came out the book was kind of ignored. It was revived around 2015 on this platform called Iron March, where a lot of the real and aspiring global neo-Nazi terrorist groups have come together. Mason's message seemed to fit contemporary circumstances. This is when we see this whole weird mass of people start committing racist attacks, doing random apolitical massacres, doing school shootings, all after becoming influenced by neo-Nazi terrorist doctrines.

George Lincoln Rockwell

Suddenly, Mason's message of dramatic violence and murderous chaos makes him a very important ideologue. Because the movement began to advocate for a decentralized global network of neo-Nazi terrorism, especially online. There are neo-Nazi arrests and attacks going on constantly around the world. The neo-Nazis' influence blended more "apolitical" things like school shooters, incels, other kinds of public violence. There is a strong serial killer fetish as well.

JOHN: I do want to get into how it manifests today. But first, let's go back to the American Nazi Party, the Party that Mason joined at fourteen. What did that look like? It was coming out of the 60s, out of the civil rights movement. How did the right, the far right, organize in the aftermath of the racial advances of the 1960s and 1970s? And where did Mason fit into that?

SPENCER: Right. It's kind of a complicated story, because the far right has multiple pieces to it, because there's the white supremacist piece, and then there's the more "moderate" pieces, some of whom now control the government. You won't find much difference between the John Birch Society's rhetoric and what Trump and Musk are saying. What happens in terms of fascists after World War II is ...you could be an open Nazi supporter before World War II, right? There were well-placed people, respected in our society, who were open Nazis. Then it became taboo after the War. Some groups re-branded as crypto-Nazi groups. These formed, but they kept their message a little bit on the down low. In 1959, almost fifteen years after the War, we saw the first open neo-Nazi group parading around in brown shirts, and waving swastika flags. This is the American Nazi Party. They were encouraged by the rise of the McCarthy Hearings. They think, "McCarthy's good, but he didn't go far enough." It's later in the 1960s that the American Nazi Party positioned itself against the New Left and the civil rights movement. Their first demonstration was against U.S. involvement in Lebanon. It was called "*Save Ike from the Kikes*," which is interesting because they're almost like taking a pro-non-white, pro-Middle Eastern stance. Anyway, some complicated politics.

The American Nazi Party really became known because it was led by a guy named George Lincoln Rockwell. He was very good at grabbing publicity. He was a PR guy in his prior life. Rockwell used these shocking, very taboo, symbols to attract people. The attraction was the very outrageousness of it all, and once he reeled people in - the indoctrination of traditional National Socialist propaganda began.

Rockwell's American Nazi Party functioned as an agitprop theater group through most of the 1960s. They didn't kill anyone. Rockwell, though, was killed by a supporter. But I found in my research, there wasn't actually an open neo-Nazi massacre in the United States until 1977.

The neo-Nazi movement we know today, the super violent, aggressive, decentralized movement, did not exist in the 1960s. The 1960's American Nazi Party centered around a very specific, organized structure. The Nazis were not using the kind of violence we're used to seeing today. Other groups, like the Klu Klux Klan, were enacting that violence and terror. Mason joined this organized, propaganda-based American Nazi Party in 1966. He's very young. He's fourteen-years-old. Which might seem strange to be so young, but when you look at what is happening online today with the interest in terrorist doctrines, these kids are often very young. The guy who founded the *Feuerkrieg Division*, which is an influential neo-Nazi hate group, was twelve-years-old when he founded it.

This is similar to Mason. I think Mason is always thinking about appealing to fourteen-year-olds. It explains some of the crazy things he says, talking about Charles Manson, who was a friend of his, as well as the adoration of serial killers and this appeal to anti-system violence, right, it seems to be pretty unfocused, almost immature.

JOHN: By the 1970s what was the American Nazi Party? Rockwell had been killed. Members did not like the new leader. The party began to break up into a bunch of different factions. Some of them became murderers, mass murderers, including in Cleveland, Frank Spisak, who killed three people and had an odd career in the press.

SPENCER: I think Spisak was on death row the longest of anyone. There were Supreme Court cases about him. There are few famous Supreme Court cases brought by neo-Nazis, including *Brandenburg versus Ohio*. Brandenburg was a Klan leader who was also friends with James Mason. The lawsuit concerned where the line between free speech and advocating violence is. And then, of course, the famous one is the Skokie lawsuit. One of these splinter factions from Rockwell's Party, the NSPA, wanted to march in this town, Skokie, Illinois, where a lot of Holocaust survivors lived. The march was really a feint to keep holding these rather large rallies they were leading in Marquette Park, Chicago, a community that was resisting desegregation. Have you ever heard about MLK being hit by a rock? That happened at the protests in Marquette park. It led him to say, he had never seen violent mobs in the South like he had in Chicago. The Skokie thing was actually a feint to get a legal right to march there so the NSPA could go back up to Marquette with impunity. And so that was another famous neo-Nazi lawsuit.

Some people don't know this, but in the Blues Brothers, the scene where they run over the "Illinois Nazis" is actually a quite literal reference about the Skokie incident. Except no one got run over, really. And the speech Henry Gibson gives in that scene is actually taken verbatim from a documentary about one of the other Nazi splinter groups. It's in a documentary called *The California Reich*. And again, that splinter group is led by another guy James Mason worked with. So there's all these splinter groups, coming out of what had been the American Nazi Party, going on. This is when the neo-Nazi movement, as we know it today, starts to fracture into many different groups. There are murders emerging from these groups. There is no central party. James Mason

is part of all this. The groups are all arguing with each other, trying to take control of each other, feuding with each other, fusing with each other.

Mason's a central part of this. He's in southern Ohio, I should note, at the time, he's in Chillicothe. A lot of Mason's action goes around in that area. They're holding marches in Cincinnati, where Jerry Springer is the mayor at the time. And people are pressuring Springer to suppress the marches. This is the late 1970s.

Mason reflects on all of this stuff, marches and rallies, and concludes that there's no point in doing any of this legal, political work. Mason wants to move to terrorism. Not guerrilla warfare. It's beyond guerrilla warfare. Guerrilla warfare implies you're an armed part of a bigger political movement. And Mason moves to saying, "No, we just need random terrorism." These are Mason's answers to what goes on in the 1970s.

This is all a continuation of the reconstruction of National Socialism in the United States after its delegitimization during World War II. It's a complicated web of intricacies.

JOHN: And backstabbings. And it seems like that's one of the things these guys do really well is fight with each other as much as anything else. Can you unpack that a little bit? As to what are they fighting about? I mean, don't they have ideologies that are very similar? Or are there breaks? Is Mason really more radical than someone like Rockwell?

JAMES MASON

SPENCER: Well, I think small, small radical political movements always argue with each other a lot. With these guys, part of it is because they have a doctrine, and part is that they haven't had a centralized party since Rockwell. There are so many factional smaller groups so everyone's vying for dominance. They can't have a live and let live perspective. There is a tremendous amount of violence which is often between group members and some violence aimed at other groups. It's very strange. If you look at the breakdowns of violence perpetrated by the white supremacist movement, sometimes they're killing people from historically oppressed groups, but a lot of times they are killing each other. The internecine feuds, criminal actions, and home invasions account for a lot of the violence. But there are shootouts with the police, too. And not uncommonly, they'll slaughter their own families, they'll kill their girlfriend or wife or kids or whatever.

There is just like a lot of violence in general, you know, and this is a movement that ideologically rejects ethics and thinks it's beyond good and evil. This was an important thing for the actual Nazi regime, they did not feel bound by any traditional ethics. Plus they see this as a revolutionary movement. Generally, revolutionary movements aren't shy about using violence. These groups attract pretty fringe people. It doesn't just attract them, but it gives them a license to do what they want. Because we could say the radical left attracts fringe people too. But the radical left is not promoting violence in this kind of way. The radical left doesn't create this internal violent culture. Certainly not this sort of interpersonal violence. I would say that neo-Nazism is a constant fixture in American life. In fact, National Socialism has now been in the United States for over one hundred years. The first group was established in 1922 by German expatriates. This is a permanent part of our society. And it's kind of a small but permanent kind of politics

and it's not going to change. It is in some ways the logical conclusion of far right politics, right? You'll see white supremacist groups saying this, which is quite useful as a recruiting pitch to more moderate people: when conservatives say "Western civilization,: they actually mean "white." They claim if you really do want to take control of society, well then, you need someone like Hitler and a one party State. If you're against the "International Bankers," the neo-Nazis will say it's because they're Jewish and we need to get rid of Finance Capital - it's the logical conclusion of a lot of far-right stuff. So it's not going to go away. There could be some other idea that could take its place, but right now it's still the hardest right wing thing - the most extreme form of the ideas circulating on the far right.

JOHN: I don't want to delve too extensively into this just yet, but the neo-Nazi factions we are discussing seem distinct from the Patriot movement or those Tea Party activists who emerged following Obama's election. While they may draw from a similar reservoir of sentiment, they differ in their methods and, I suspect, their core ideologies. Would you agree?

SPENCER: Again, it just sounds like typical far-right anti-communism. And this is why you've seen the militias just basically get on the Trump train, right? In 2015, they supported Cruz and his presidential bid. They did not, they were not all on board for Trump. Later after he won the nomination in the first term, they kind of pivoted to get on board with him. But a lot of their ideas clash with his. Some of the militia's ideas are not that much different from the rest of the right, except some of the decentralization we'll talk about. The militia movement's relationship to white supremacists is kind of odd because of the idea's background. A lot of these ideas come out of a guy named William Potter Gale, who created a movement around the idea called Posse Comitatus in 1971. He's just a Christian Identity minister, which is this racist form of Christianity. C.I. had become intertwined with neo-Nazism too. And so a lot of ideas that circulate today come from him. The idea that the county sheriff is the highest authority in the land and he can reject any laws he wants. This comes out of Posse Comitatus. All the sovereign citizen legal gobbledygook comes out of his ideas. And he is an explicit white supremacist and anti-Semite. But as the militia movements evolved over time by 2000s, there have been three or four waves, each wave becoming less and less white supremacist.

WILLIAM POTTER GALE

There was a big revival in 2008, when the Tea Party came up and the Oath Keepers and the Three Percenters formed then as well. Really, there are no white supremacist leaders in it, like open ideological white supremacists. I mean, OK, are they implicitly racist in the way that someone would say a lot of the far right is? Yes. Are they explicitly racist? No, they're not. And they're very sensitive to that accusation. These groups also are very decentralized.

You know, historically, before the Civil War, proslavery advocates and those resisting desegregation advocated for states' rights. Instead of states' rights, with the failure of that rhetoric, Gale proposed "county rights." And so there's decentralization there and these groups are always looking towards these pre-constitutional forms in American history, like the Articles of Confederacy and Maritime Courts. So they're highly anti-government in that they want this sort of far right decentralization. Now,

this clashes with Trump, which is one of the interesting things, but it also clashes with the neo-Nazis who want a centralized authoritarian super state. Nazis are not free marketeers. They do not believe in a laissez faire economy.

Whereas these guys are the militias and such are super, super, super into this. So there are some real differences going on. There are differences in wanting to separate themselves, the militias, from white supremacists, because people of color are welcome in these groups. I don't want to say gay men or other people like maybe group by group. Maybe there's some that accept them. But largely, they're multiracial or they wish to be multiracial groups I think they authentically do. If people are willing to stomach what's going on. All this is to say, there are authentic differences between these movements.

JOHN: Well, getting back to Mason, we have Rockwell as his kind of white power godfather. And then who was Joseph Tommasi? And how did those two, Rockwell and Tommasi, with competing levels of ideological severity and tactics influence what Mason goes on to do?

William Luther Pierce

SPENCER: A lot of interesting things go on in the 1970s as the American Nazi Party splinters. Some people form a terrorist wing. There are also odd things like an explicitly openly gay neo-Nazi group founded in California, the National Socialist League. But amongst this terrorist wing, we have James Mason. He formed a group called the National Socialist Movement, who strangely are still around today, and marched at Charlottesville.

William Pierce, who ends up writing the Turner Diaries, forms a group called the National Alliance. Joseph Tommasi splits from Pierce to form the group called the National Socialist Liberation Front. Tommasi's in California. He's in L.A., in El Monte. And they're aping the new left. They're aping the style of it. So these guys appear countercultural. Previously, neo-Nazis had been very culturally conservative. They had short haircuts. They listened to classical music. They acted like traditional conservatives in society, socially and culturally. The NSLF, the National Socialist Liberation Front, is not like this. They are explicitly countercultural. They don't wear these uniforms. They do drugs. There aren't these conservative restrictions. And this allows a lot of young people to embrace the neo-Nazi movement in the 1970s, young teenagers especially. These younger people are into racism and anti-Semitism while rejecting the old fogeys of the movement. And then Tommasi embraces terrorism openly. Now what they do is bomb some Marxist bookstores mostly and they do some tear gassing.

It's funny. You can find these articles about them in the newspaper archives, like they tear gas a big gathering asking for the reopening of the Rosenberg case, the Jewish couple that was executed for leaking nuclear weapons secrets to the Soviets. Tommasi's group does these things. They don't kill anyone, but they plant this idea that Nazis should engage in guerrilla warfare and that they should embrace modern cultural forms that young people are involved in. And Mason joins Tommasi's party. That's the connection.

JOHN: Tommasi meets a bad end, right? He's murdered.

SPENCER: He's murdered by a member of this group that used to be the American Nazi Party. As I said, Nazis love to murder each other.

JOHN: So James Mason is at home in Ohio. What's he doing to spread the message of this party he started, and how does he get membership, and what does his day-to-day activity organizing a neo-Nazi movement like?

SPENCER: Early on in the original party and then into the mid-1970s, Mason did little propaganda events. They hold free Rudolph Hess rallies in Cincinnati Square. Hess was one of the last major officials in the NSDAP, in the Nazi government, who was captured after the War, and he was never released. I think Hess committed suicide maybe in the late 1980s. He was held in Spandau Prison in Germany. So there was a movement to release Hess, and the Nazis, neo-Nazis loved this because it was like the one popular movement they could all get involved in, right? Mason set up a literature table at a county fair in Ross County, not big high-profile stuff. Mason was an editor and publisher. He designed magazines, and the neo-Nazis were pretty short on talented people. He was a graphic designer. He knew how to edit and print magazines. He produced a lot of neo-Nazi magazines in this group he founded, the NSM. He was in other groups. There were more acronyms. A lot of this is in that documentary, *The California Reich*, which is on YouTube. You should watch it if you're interested in 1970s neo-Nazism, it's fascinating.

He had been in this National Socialist Liberation Front movement secretly, and then it got revived in 1980, so he started his newsletter *SIEGE* originally as part of that, and after he split with them in 1982, he was on his own. Basically, Mason is in these big movements, but over time he's in these smaller and smaller splinter groups, until he pops up as a party of one, as I like to say, putting out his newsletter in his home in southern Ohio. *SEIGE* had an issue print run of no more than a hundred copies. It's very, very, very small. When it folds, he gives a list of names and subscriptions to two of his friends. There are sixty-six names on there, and he says some of them are trades.

JOHN: And let's talk a little bit about how information was spread in the 1970s, 1980s, and into the mid-1990s, before the Internet. Because I think a magazine like *SIEGE* or the other white nationalist newsletters you were talking about occupied a special place in the culture. In part, how they were spread. As you mentioned, the Nazi newsletter mailing lists were incredibly important. More than the magazines themselves, these mailing lists were what was valued and protected, right?

SPENCER: Right. Even well before the advent of the Internet, there was such a centralization of media, and it was so capital intensive for so many years, right? There were three TV networks. There was no cable for a long time. There would be one local newspaper in each city. And part of the effect of this is it blocked out anything on the left and right. There was one public voice and it was very hard to get alternative information out. One of the ways of getting your message out was to self-publish magazines and try to figure out how and where you could get distribution. Often difficult it was especially difficult

for neo-Nazis, there weren't a lot of places that would carry their publications. So you needed to have subscribers, and this is where these subscription lists came in, because it was a way to reach people and it was very difficult to reach them otherwise.

Obviously, with the advent of the Internet in the late-1990s, early-2000s, things began to change. I don't think it really gets going until after the World Wide Web, and this is really in the 2000s, where everything has to be on the Internet. Everybody didn't own a computer then.

In fact, Mason was doing his newsletter and he was mimeographing it himself. He actually got part of them printed. There's six pages in it. He got, at a printer, a red banner with the *SIEGE* title on each page then went home and mimeographed everything else himself. *SIEGE* got fused into the fanzine networks. Fanzines were these independently produced, usually xeroxed, self-produced magazines. Originally made by fans of science fiction, but then in the 1970s and 1980s, fanzines got picked up in the punk rock scene, often about music but then about other stuff. There became a whole huge network, there were thousands of them, and he sort of ended up sliding in on the edge of that. If you go back and talk to people involved, there was always a question about whether they would allow Holocaust denial literature, for example, in their review sections. Everything is accepted, right? No matter how crazy. And the Holocaust deniers are like, great, we'll take you up on that. The main ones like *Factsheet Five*, which was a magazine that just reviewed fanzines, would not. But some of these things were open questions. And so Mason's self-publishing venture ended up eventually sliding into these networks, into these self-publication networks. That all was designed to get around centralized media.

JOHN: Well, let's talk about the newsletter he produced, because it's the crux of your book, the second half of the book. So let's talk about what he was writing about and some of his innovations or additions to traditional neo-Nazi rhetoric.

SPENCER: There were several. First, his basic premise came out of these murders started happening in the late 1970s, most neo-Nazis were distancing themselves from that. Saying things like, "Oh no, we don't want these people. They are delegitimizing our movement." Mason counterintuitively embraces them, and then he wraps up his ideological reasoning around them, right? And so, this is quite different from the others, this open and public embrace of murder, of serial killers, of mass murderers, right? And that's his main innovation.

He is influenced by Charles Manson. He makes a habit of writing prisoners, something a lot of radical groups do. And through this activity he runs into Charles Manson and befriends him. Mason decides Charles Manson should be the new guru for the neo-Nazi movement. This was the last straw for a lot of people, even people close to him, like Tom Metzger, the leader of the White Aryan Resistance, was like, "Hey, James, I love you, but no, like, bridge too far." It's what broke up Mason's relationship with William Pierce, who had been his mentor when he was a kid. And I mean, Pierce is advocating mass terrorism, and nuking Tel Aviv, but he's like, "Charles Manson was a bridge too far."

Charles Manson connects James Mason with the 1980s counter-cultural underground because there's a real interest in Charles Manson. And its a connection beyond the people who help Mason out later, but bands like Sonic Youth who have songs about Manson and Lydia Lunch, right? "Death Valley '69."

It's a common thing to have interest in Charles Manson. Then people find out there's this Neo-Nazi who is personal friends with Charles Manson and he's created this doctrine where people are supposed to worship Charles Manson as this new manifestation of Hitler.

Mason creates his own doctrine called "the Universal Order," a sort of crypto-spiritual approach based on Charles Manson's ideas. That major idea basically advocates, amongst other things, a natural order underneath the world. It's a kind of Gnosticism. The world is, for Mason, this corrupt Jewish controlled illusion. These are old, untrue conspiracy theories, just to be clear, but Mason says "it's a system where the Jews are pulling the strings of everyone else." What Mason adds to this old conspiracy theory is this idea that the natural order is National Socialism which if embraced can destroy the Jewish system.

And this is very useful if you belong to an unpopular political movement, because you don't have to accept defeat as the end of your movement. Nazis don't usually admit, "Oh, our movement was going great and then it got stopped. We lost World War Two." Right. Mason says, "this is an eternal universal thing." It gives you a good ideological grounding to continue your work, even when it's unpopular.

Mason was, also, influenced by a woman also who's embraced by the American Nazi Party named Savitri Devi, who promoted Hitler as an eternal being, which, again, had this function to reassure neo-Nazis after the War that their movement could and would succeed, that it wasn't over.

JOHN: Right. So before getting into the whole counterculture piece too deeply, can you give us a short history of *SIEGE* and Mason? What happened to him?

SPENCER: Nothing, Mason is still hanging out in his apartment in Denver. He still mentors young Neo-Nazis, one of them, this guy who was in this group called the *Atomwaffen Division* which was inspired directly by Mason's work was just given a life sentence for murdering a gay Jewish man in Southern California. There is this picture of him with Sam Woodward and Mason in Mason's apartment.

Mason comes into contact with these four countercultural guys. They discover him, they popularize him, and they publish him amongst their countercultural circles and the very niche circles in the 1980s and 1990s amongst industrial and neo-folk musicians and something called the extreme culture, which is kind of just what it sounds like. People just wallowing in the most extreme things. There are filmmakers and publishers. Mason's book came out in 1993. One of these guys, as I said, Michael J. Moynihan, publishes it.

In 1995, Mason went to jail. He had a real predilection for fourteen, fifteen, sixteen-year-olds. He had been arrested two times for photographing fifteen and sixteen-year-olds. When he got arrested, he had a fifteen-year-old girlfriend who had turned sixteen while they were going out, and he got arrested for threatening her and her new boyfriend, who wasn't white. You can imagine how this created more tension. They lived behind him in a house. It was all very strange. I mean, this is clearly somebody who's not the most level-headed person. He goes to jail for four years. He converts or embraces his own idiosyncratic version of Christianity that involves, of course, racism and anti-Semitism, but also

UFOs. When Mason gets out of prison he writes several books about this new religious outlook. Then he was released from prison in 1999. *SIEGE* is reissued after he gets out of prison in 2003. And it all just kind of fizzles off the radar. Until *SIEGE* gets uploaded online, I should say, in 2006. I knew about it because these counter-cultural figures started following Mason. Mason was rediscovered. He was physically rediscovered by these Iron March people. They found him and went to his apartment. And *SIEGE* was reprinted and revived, again. That's his short trajectory.

JOHN: Let's begin with the counterculturalists and who they were, where they came from, and why they latch on to Mason and Charles Manson's role in all of that? Maybe give us an overview of the collective first, and then we can get into some of the individuals.

1993 - Boyd Rice with reporters during a demonstration for Charles Manson's false imprisonment

SPENCER: Sure. So what happens is that these four people who are all members of a paper organization called *The Abraxas Foundation*, a self-described occult, fascist think tank, find James Mason via the Charles Manson connection, and they're the ones who publish him and popularize him. So the first one is Boyd Rice. He is an industrial musician. Rice's industrial music is not like Nine Inch Nails, his band NON was atonal no-chord music, very jarring, pulls off of earlier European avant-garde traditions, sort of parallel and intersecting with the punk movement starting in the 1970s and continuing on. Boyd Rice is one of the best known of that original first wave of musicians. He's an American. He was already interested in Manson and Hitler when he met a gun dealer in 1986, called Victor Malik, who told Rice about this Neo-Nazi who was actually friends with Charles Manson and thinks he's the new Hitler. So Boyd Rice writes this gushing letter to James Mason talking about how Rice is totally into Mason's project and wants to help Mason out.

I should say a lot of this information comes from James Mason who sold his personal correspondence. He was an inveterate collector of all kinds of things, he kept every letter he had incoming and outgoing. He made carbon copies from the 1960s to about 2003 and sold them to an archive in Lawrence, Kansas. And so, there's sixty boxes of correspondence there. And this is why it took me five years to write this book. And there are many boxes and folders I have not even gone through. At the end, I was like, "naw, I'm not going to request these ten more folders." You know, at some point, my life has to continue on. And so I have all these letters, and they're crazy letters.

Anton LaVey, Adam Parfrey, Boyd Rice

Boyd Rice contacts James Mason, then Rice proceeds to introduce him to all these other people, including Adam Parfrey. Adam Parfrey, we'll go through more quickly, who's a publisher, he founded a press called

Feral House that became very influential. It has sold hundreds of thousands of books. Parfrey publishes all these guys. And is the first person to publish James Mason in a non-Nazi periodical, and the first person to put him in a book, which is a very famous underground anthology called Apocalypse Culture.

The third guy is a Satanist named Nikolas Schreck. He's a musician too. He's in this terrible band called Radio Werewolf. He is a Satanist. He puts Mason in a book, published by Parfrey, they create the circle where they're publishing each other and interviewing each other. It's a very self-referential book called The Manson File that also became a famous anthology, and he puts James Mason in his first film, which is a documentary called *Charles Manson Superstar*, which you can watch online. It was sort of interesting. Then Schreck marries Anton LaVey's daughter, Zeena. All these guys are interested in the Church of Satan.

The Church of Satan was founded by Anton LaVey. Like the American Nazi Party, it is the first open, and there's a similarity there, Satanist group. I'm writing an article right now about Nazi Satanism, and there's all these debates about precursors and stuff, but everyone's like, well, LaVey founded the first real, honest group. LaVey founded it in San Francisco in 1966. And LaVey's really a right-wing guy. I mean, at the end of the day, the Church of Satan is based in this weird, right-wing social Darwinist eugenicist stuff.

The fourth guy who joins a little later is Michael J. Moynihan. He's a younger man. He plays industrial music, too. This is how he gets in contact with Boyd Rice. Boyd Rice also introduces James Mason to Moynihan. Moynihan later shifts to playing neo-folk music, which is sort of descended from European folk music, but mixed in with this very dark feeling mood, again, sort of adjacent to the punk scene. And Moynihan is a publisher, too. He is good with languages, and he ends up editing. He meets Mason and immediately says, "I would love to turn the *SIEGE* newsletters into a book." He edits them into an anthology. It takes him a number of years, and then he self-publishes it. And he's also a good publicist, so he distributes it through both neo-Nazi circles and underground countercultural music/art circles. He gets it in all these fascist-leaning fanzines, which themselves are distributed by Tower Books, a store chain that you would buy music at and fanzines and underground publications around the U.S. I had many people tell me they found out about these obscure fanzines, because they bought them at Tower. They were just on the magazine shelf. Moynihan also gets all kinds of attention in alternative weekly newspapers.

And so these are the four guys who pluck Mason out of this tiny hole he's in, publishing less than a hundred copies an issue, and only talking to very few people, after he alienated a bunch of his fellow neo-Nazis and white supremacists. You know, he's not talking to anyone, just the people who he can tolerate and will tolerate him. Then suddenly he is handed this huge audience in a circle he never would have, probably didn't even know about. He didn't like rock music. Had no connections to and would never have been able to gain access to this audience without the help of Rice, Parfrey, Schreck, and Moynihan. There's a story here about how radical cultural movements that aren't necessarily political can come into

contact with radical political movements and create this fusion and do something that none of them could have before.

JOHN: Yeah, and I'd like to spend some time talking about that, because it seems to me that there's something else going on. Tom Metzger and WAR have a cable access show. Bob Larson was part of this whole thing, Geraldo, Oprah, Phil Donahue, all these people pick up on some of this extreme culture that we're talking about with these four guys, and these guys somehow parlay that into appearances and different ways of promoting themselves and this odious ideology. So can we talk a little bit more about how they used each other and that conversation between Mason and Metzger and Rice and Moynihan and Schreck all played out?

SPENCER: So Mason doesn't, but these other guys are able to gain mainstream media coverage through their public visibility and extremity. Tom Metzger, who ran, as you said, the White Aryan Resistance (WAR), is a really fascinating guy. At one point, he won a Democratic primary in Southern California in a congressional race. He ran a group called the White Aryan Resistance. They recruited Nazi skinheads. Over time he moved to a revolutionary stance, totally promoted violence, embraced it, was into it, and became very notorious when the Nazi skinhead thing exploded in the U.S., which was about 1988. It's kind of crazy because in Britain the movement is older. You get these older British skins because they got involved in the 1970s or 1980s.

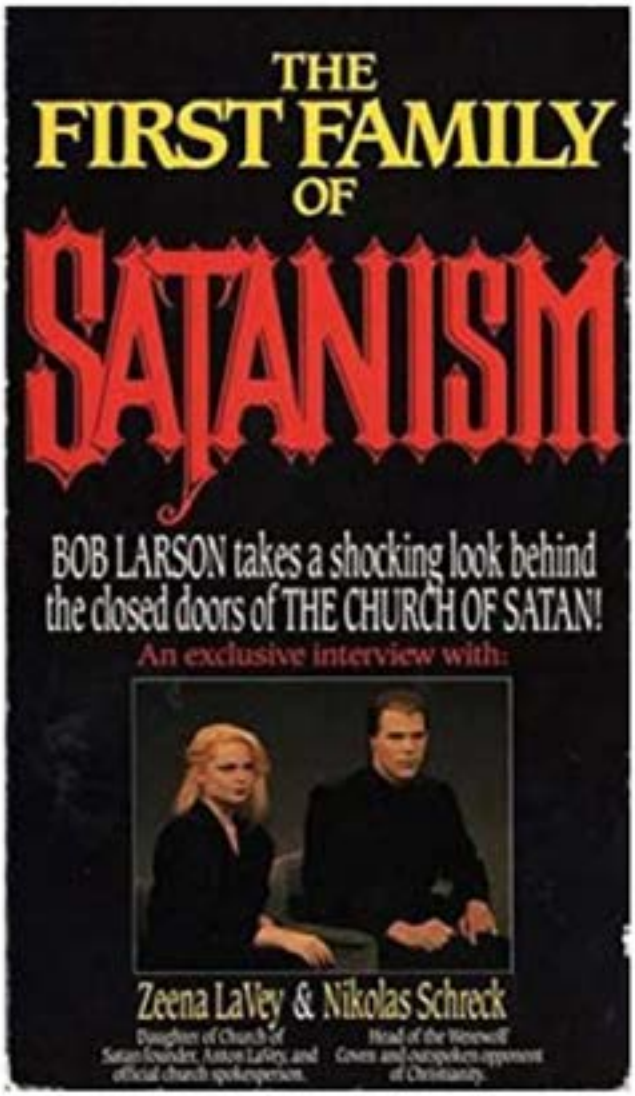
Metzger was very closely associated with skinheads and became very notorious for this association after one of his crew murdered an Ethiopian immigrant near Portland, Oregon in 1988. Metzger was sued in relation to the murder in an innovative civil suit by the Southern Poverty Law Center. And the lawsuit spread his fame. Metzger was all over local cable access shows. He exploited this to create community access to cable to create a syndicated racist show - *Race and Reason.*

Tom Metzger's cable access show, Race and Reason

Metzger had on this show Boyd Rice very early on in 1986. Soon after Rice meets Mason, in fact these letters to and from Mason to Adam Parfrey, and others, discuss how to get Boyd Rice on Metzger's show. Meanwhile I should say Tom Metzger and James Mason are very close. In fact, what was probably the biggest piece of publicity for Mason's book in the 1990s was when Tom Metzger was on a mainstream TV talk show, *The McLaughlin Report*, and in the middle of the interview he waves around a copy of *SIEGE* and he's like, "This is where things are really at."

Some of the others gained mainstream publicity because of "the satanic panic," which was this sort of folk panic about satanism. People are claiming they suddenly remembered under hypnosis or regression therapy that uncovered memories of abuse in satanic cults or covens. They're claiming they suddenly remembered that satanists were going around doing these ritual murders as part of a satanic mass or whatever. Satanists get a lot of publicity including Nikolas Schreck and his wife Zeena who is the spokesperson for the Church of Satan. Anton LaVey gets a lot of attention. The Abraxas guys have become tight with Anton LaVey. Both Michael Moynihan and Boyd Rice become priests in the Church of Satan and because of that they get reviewed in their internal the Church of Satan's magazine - *The Cloven Hoof.* They get a lot of attention from the Church of Satan's glowing review of them by the guy who later

became the head of the Church, Peter Gilmore. The magazine runs their ads, not too many people would run ads for a Nazi terrorist book, but the Church of Satan did.


THE
FIRST FAMILY
OF
SATANISM
BOB LARSON takes a shocking look behind the closed doors of THE CHURCH OF SATAN!
An exclusive interview with:
Zeena LaVey & Nikolas Schreck

They're visible in "the Satanic Panic," at one point this concert that most of them participate in in San Francisco is taped for Geraldo Rivera's two-hour special on Satanism. It's been claimed to be the most popular, highest rated, TV special up to that point. Meanwhile, there's this guy, Bob Larson, who's a fundamentalist, evangelical Christian who's way into "the Satanic Panic." Larson has a radio show and Boyd Rice was a frequent guest, Nikolas Schreck and Zeena go on his show. There is one show called "Neo-Nazi Satanism" with James Mason and Michael Moynihan is present as well on that one. They're using Larson and Larson is using them. At one point, James Mason says to Larson, "You use us, we use you."

JOHN: Yeah when I had my college radio show back in those days, the Bob Larson stuff was famous for clipping soundbites. Glen Benton from Deicide was on Larson's show and Benton would do this demon persona and Larson would try to cast him out. It was ridiculous stuff. It was great theater. I mean they were all showmen.

SPENCER: This is why Mason, who is not a Satanist, really liked Anton LaVey, appreciated him, even though LaVey is Jewish. Mason compares LaVey to George Lincoln Rockwell, they were showmen, and they used these outrageous tactics to get media attention which brought people in because National Socialist doctrine is pretty boring and very stupid. So sitting there reading the 600 pages of Mein Kampf is not as exciting as doing something wild, talking about serial killers, and antagonizing people, per se. Hitler was very culturally conservative. People forget that while he did have avant-garde art influences, he was generally very conservative. I pointed this out to a friend of mine who's a guide in a former concentration camp about the industrial band Throbbing Gristle and their use of Nazi symbolism. They weren't Nazis, but they used a lot of Nazi imagery. It's an abrasive, extreme thing. And she said, "Spencer, the Nazis listened to things like polka bands. They were all about traditional German culture. They weren't avant-gardist trying to offend people." It's different from what Trump is doing. He is trying to offend people more than the NSDAP, Hitler's party, was.

So yeah, they are all able to use this showmanship and each other. Larson uses them. They use Larson. They're very conscious about what they're doing. James Mason was conscious about people being drawn by his extremes and particularly about Charles Manson. He was serious about Charles

Manson being his guru, but he also knew that young people, mostly boys, there's a big, big, strong element of misogyny throughout this whole thing. I don't explore it in my book because I got overwhelmed, but it's a huge part here. If you're a feminist scholar wanting to dig into this, please contact me. I will share my materials. It should be built out.

Mason knew that this would be an effective hook in catching people. There was a fad for Charles Manson in the 1980s that was growing and kind of peaked in the 1990s. The height of this was right when the *SIEGE* came out as a book, and it was when Guns N' Roses recorded a Charles Manson song on their album *The Spaghetti Incident?* Charles Manson became a big, big deal. And again, it was semi-ironic. Some people were into it. Some people were fascinated because he's an outlandish figure. Some people just think it's ridiculous to be into it. So it was all kinds of things to different people. Mason is aware that he's using this. And Moynihan has great timing because he's very sensitive to the cultural winds. The *SIEGE* book comes out just at the right time where they're able to get some attention. A lot of the attention in the alternative weekly papers are through the Manson angle.

JOHN: Yeah, I mean you couldn't spin a record around without hitting a Manson reference at one point, especially in the 1990s. You've read the correspondence of people like Boyd Rice and Adam Parfrey, and how much of it did they believe? Because in subsequent years they've tried to say, well, we were just being edgelords. We didn't really believe this. They've backtracked some of their involvement and participation, especially Moynihan. So how much do you believe was ideologically driven and how much was used for notoriety, shock, and fame?

SPENCER: Right, so there's a couple of different questions here. The first is, yes, they all – I think - they all tried to hide this. I don't think Schrek did so much because he's sort of shameless. He did limited stuff and he put Manson in a book and a film. There we go. You're not hiding from that.

Art Market

Greenspon gallery canceled an exhibition featuring artist Boyd Rice, an alleged neo-Nazi.

Benjamin Sutton

The others hid all this stuff as much as they could. But as you said, I got access to the personal correspondence and it is wild. People knew that Boyd Rice had some level of association with the Neo-Nazi milieu. There's a photo of Boyd in *Sassy* magazine, which was a very popular magazine for teenage girls, with a Nazi skinhead leader Bob Heick of the American Front, in uniform and holding knives. So he couldn't get beyond it. Especially, once it resurfaced that he had been on Tom Metzger's TV show. He's tried to downplay it and dismiss it and say, this sort of a lark and he was, you know, blah, blah, blah.

And Adam Parfrey, he was a publisher and he put white supremacist stuff in his books. But these books were about conspiracy theorists and other stuff, he was like, "oh, no, I'm exposing them for what they are." And it's just like I'm just into extremes for their own sake. Well, Parfrey, if you read his public documents, he's far right. He's a racist. He hates Latino people. He hates disabled people. I mean he's just a bigot, like a garden variety bigot. He shows adherence and sympathy to National Socialist ideals in the letters to Charles Manson and James Mason. He never does in public. He would never admit this stuff in public. But he's tied to people like James Mason far beyond just using him to publish his material.

Similar stories with the others, Boyd Rice is – because he's been in the hottest position, has always tried to downplay this stuff. And his letters are just wild. They have swastikas on them. They have *88*s on them. He says, "We're engaged in a campaign to fool people to think we're not Nazis but we're using this to get our ideas out."

Moynihan, even though today he is an ethno-separatist very publicly, at one point became very famous because he wrote a book called Lords of Chaos about the Norwegian black metal scene. I track it very carefully in my book how Moynihan went from being pretty open about being a Nazi and his Nazi sympathies to suddenly backtracking when he Lords of Chaos book comes out. Now he's not a Nazi. There are two years where he actually runs a campaign denying his past and attacking people. And all these writers and reviewers aid him in this. They believe his outright lies and even when it's clear they know the truth, they downplay the things he did. Like they'll say, "Oh, he just distributed *SIEGE*." But he actually created it, laid it out, published it himself and distributed it. You know what I mean? Today he still downplays his level of involvement. In the first introduction he wrote for the *SIEGE* book, he says, "I hope people use these ideas. I hope they don't just read about these ideas. I hope they enact them." And that's something he's never admitted. That first introduction got buried and forgotten about.

JOHN: And there was also a kind of a movement towards the end of the 90s into the 2000s, which I think led to the Alt-Right. Jim Goad and *The eXile* guys Mark Ames and Matt Taibbi. These guys were picking up on that thread of "how shocking can we be, how misogynist can we be, how racist can we be, up to the point where we can still deny it or excuse it with we're just joking. It's ironic satire."

SPENCER: So I hate to say you should read my book. But if you do read it, you'll see exactly what *Abaraxas* was saying and doing then is exactly what's being said and done now. I would say it's uncanny, but it's more than that. I don't know if they're the first people to do this. I don't make claims in the book. I just show what they do. There's not a lot of commentary per se in the book. I document what they did, what they said, but I avoid too much interpretation, let's say.

Partly, to get to your earlier question, I don't care what their intention was. Were these guys really neo-Nazis? I don't give a fuck. They helped this guy, James Mason, put this Nazi stuff into the world. They said and did these things. They helped all kinds of people in this network. They made appearances on these shows. I don't care about their reasoning for it. I just don't. I'm not saying it's an invalid question to ask, but even if the answer was, "They were doing it ironically," it doesn't matter. You know what I mean? The things that they said and did to avoid accountability are the things that are said and done now, word for word.

Were they the first person to do it? I couldn't tell you. You'd have to look at other sources from around the same time, right? This is a technical question.

These four guys start recruiting people around them, a couple dozen people who are essentially right-wing artists, musicians, and writers. And there are plenty of white supremacists scattered in there. And some of them, like Marilyn Manson, are on the edge of this. He's connected to both Anton LaVey, but also Boyd Rice. Rice says that Marilyn Manson told him that he was Marilyn Manson's mentor. I don't know, but they do clearly know each other and Rice is an early promoter of Marilyn Manson.

And of course, Jim Goad was part of this circle. Goad joined *Taki's Magazine*, which is where Richard Spencer and Gavin McInnes were working early on. Goad worked most recently for *Counter-Currents*, which is run by Greg Johnson, who I wrote an article for the Southern Poverty Law Center about. Johnson was involved in the re-issue of *SIEGE* in 2003.

And so there becomes another wave of this stuff. I definitely hadn't thought of Mark Ames and Matt Taibbi. They are the ones who ran *The eXile*. I was actually in Russia. I was living in Moscow in the late 1990s and *The eXile* was the alternative weekly in English there. They were tied to a fascist there. They published Eduard Limonov of the National Bolshevik Party. And it sounds like a bunch of names, but it's a small network of people. The National Bolshevik Party is infamous because one of their three founding members is Aleksandr Dugin, who is very well known now as one of the Russian fascists influencing the Putinist expansionist policy, although he's not tied to Putin directly. So yeah, this edgelord culture develops. They are some kind of key node in it. So no need for me to say it's this one group of people creating this specific way of denying things, but they clearly, if it's not super uncanny and they're obviously feeding into it. It's what became 4chan. This developed into edgelord internet culture, this obsession with extremes and this denial of responsibility. One person called it, "winky-wink fascism." They're acting like fascists. They're talking like fascists. But they're saying they're not fascists, but they really are fascists.

SEE... NOW HE'S SCARED! SO KEEP HAMMERING AWAY AT HIM... KEEP SOCKING UNTIL HE JUST NATURALLY FALLS APART! THAT'S THE WAY TO BEAT THE NAZI!!
PLUNK

John: Yeah. And Nick Fuentes is a great example of that and the Groypers and all that kind of stuff. It's an interesting churning of cultural influences. And it seems as Mason was active, then ignored, then rediscovered, which leads him to do a little bit more action and fall off only to be rediscovered by the next generation. How do we, and this is an unfair question, I know already at the beginning, how do we stop it? How does this archaeological cultural churning finally expel these ideas?

SPENCER: This is a really tough one. I mean, I don't know. Now on a network level, first these ideas seeped into structured neo-Nazi groups like the *Atomwaffen Division*. Mason was their advisor, but interestingly, they did exactly what he told them not to do, which was form a group of chapters with members. Other groups around the world were inspired by the *Atomwaffen Division*, like The Base and the *Feuerkrieg Division* and the *Sonnenkrieg Division* - plus all the splinters of the *Atomwaffen* going around the United States.

What happened then is this thing called "*SIEGE Culture*" was developed around the ideas in *SIEGE*. Out of that came *the Terrorgram* and the *Terrorgram Collective*, who used a series of shifting Telegram channels to promote these terrorist ideas. We are seeing more and more murderers connected to the *Terrorgram Collective*. This guy who just did a school shooting in Nashville was inspired by these ideas. It's not just the veneration of serial killers and school shooters, in particular, it's a promotion of school shootings, promoting child abuse, and some even promoting really random interpersonal murders. It's all blending together in a very disturbing way. And I don't know how we would suppress or disrupt that because of the technologies available for people to promote and spread these ideas. The internet has become a place where anything you express can be said on these irony-soaked chat platforms. This irony-poisoned stuff, I don't think it's a good thing. The availability of just the most extreme videos of

violence such as the beheading videos. It is just too appealing to certain people. Transgression has an appeal. Murder has an appeal. People have murdered each other as long as there's been humanity. Violence interests and appeals to people. That cat is out of the bag, and people are like, "What should we do to James Mason?" It doesn't matter. *SIEGE* exists, it's out there … now Mason writes weird Christian stuff. I mean, he's sort of irrelevant, again. It's not good that he's tutoring young neo-Nazis, but in reality, his importance is over.

I don't know what we do with these things. We're seeing the Trump administration enact watered down fascist ideas. I think Biden called him "a quasi-fascist." I like that, without getting into this long argument about if he is or isn't a fascist. Trump is creating these corrupt governmental structures right now that clearly do not respect equality or human rights or democracy. What we're seeing with these countercultural guys, today, is a subset of that. They're just more interested in interpersonal violence and they have a network that is spreading around the world. They don't feel tied to traditional political work. They don't care about Trump, even though they're building off a lot of the same energy, but they don't care about him. They want to murder people directly, not withdraw support for them and let them die on their own. That's the Trumpian way. So, I don't know. I mean, I think there's a lesson here is about, and maybe we've all learned, but I think Chloe Lum, who's in the band AIDS Wolf, said this on Blue Sky - this idea in the 20th century amongst the avant-garde that transgression was by itself good, that it was always a progressive impulse, even if the individual actors weren't saying something that was left-leaning. The impulse behind it was good because the system of the society was a problem. That is one reason people saw Feral House as a sort of left-leaning project because Parfrey was throwing out all these extremes. They're helping puncture "the consensus reality" or whatever. This again is a weird kind of Gnostic idea. But there was always the idea that at the end of the day, transgression would be progressive. But most of us now realize that transgression is not necessarily progressive and that anyone still laboring under that delusion should give it up, you know. And I think for a lot of us who were involved in these scenes, we have reflected on the fact that so much of the transgression culture was re-packaged racism, misogyny, homophobia, and antisemitism which was hiding behind the transgression or edgelord persona. I think there's been a lot of reflection about what transgressive culture means. I think that was definitely a lesson for me and others.

Intentional Homage to Nazi Propaganda Posters

Charles Manson and the New Left

By Spencer Sunshine, July 6. 2026 https://spencersunshine.com/

In his 1980s neo-Nazi terrorist newsletter SIEGE, James Mason promoted worshiping Charles Manson as the new Hitler—something that was important to the book's original popularity (though not as important to Mason's followers today). Michael Moynihan, who edited a book of the same title from James Mason's original newsletters, was attracted to Mason specifically because of the Charlie angle. The book was first released in 1993, just as a huge revival of interest in Charlie was cresting, which culminated with Guns n' Roses recording one of his songs, "Look at Your Game, Girl," for their platinum (though far from their best) album *The Spaghetti Incident?*

While this is downplayed by many of those interested in Charlie, he was intensely racist and antisemitic, repeatedly stating this— not to mention that he carved a swastika on his forehead and praised Hitler! His deep misogyny, which he used to assemble and control the predominately female Family, is also overlooked. (Once he raped a young Family member while the others watched.) And all of these elements drew James Mason to him.

Nonetheless, Charlie has remained a kind of countercultural hero of sorts, and in particular the Manson Family murders had an influence on the New Left in the 1960s. At the same time as the Manson murders, internationally parts of the Left were going underground and embracing armed struggle. And these two things got mixed up together, before—at least to the more serious elements on the Left—Charlie's reactionary views became more clear.

Nonetheless, James Mason said that "Charlie bridges the gap between Left and Right," [1] and the neo-Nazi hoped to take advantage of his countercultural appeal to draw others to his vision of a rebellion against the system. At the time at least, he envisioned that this would be done simultaneously by both the Left and Right.

In addition to the counter-cultural newspaper the *L.A. Free Press*, Yippie leader Jerry Rubin took to Charlie—at least at first. Rubin said, "I fell in love with Charles Manson the first time I saw his cherub face and sparkling eyes on TV," and that "His words and courage inspired us." [2]

The most infamous embrace, however, was the Flint War Council, the last SDS meeting in December 1969. (The Students for a Democratic Society were the largest left-wing anti-Vietnam War student group in the 1960s.) It was here that the SDS leadership decided to go underground, eventually becoming known as the Weather Underground.

At the War Council, Bernardine Dohrn, one of the group's leaders, gave a speech praising the Manson Family's murder of pregnant actress Sharon Tate and four others in a wealthy Los Angeles neighborhood. "Dig it; first they killed those pigs, then they ate dinner in the room with them, then they even shoved a fork into pig Tate's stomach. Wild!" One of the chants during the meeting was "Charles Manson Power!," and members saluted each other by holding up four fingers to represent the fork. (Dohrn later called these goings-on an "ironic joke.")[3]

June 2 Movement

The German anarchist armed group the June 2nd Movement also fetishized Charles Manson; the group's founder, Michael "Bommi" Baumann, talked about these views in his autobiographical writings. In 2010, Baumann met Nikolas Schreck at a book launch in Berlin. (Schreck had been an associate of Mason and had edited the anthology *The Manson File*, which included some of Mason's work in it.) Baumann expressed admiration for the book, and later Schreck interviewed the former underground fighter. Baumann explained why he and his comrades were attracted to Charlie—partly to separate themselves from "naïve hippie" thinking, but also to take advantage of his appeal in the counter-culture. [4]

Cover of the Spur! Editions collection of SLA documents

Allegedly there was also interest from a third armed group, the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA). In *The Manson File*, Schreck claimed that "Manson devotees in Northern California formed a brief liaison with the Symbionese Liberation Army in the mid-70s, planning at one point to engineer Manson's escape from prison." [5] The SLA was also said to have trained at the Wellspring commune outside of San Francisco, which was run by the "Manson Family-linked" group Tribal Thumb. [6]

It was William Pierce, however, who was most savvy to Charlie's politics and how they were received. (Pierce had been Mason's mentor in the American Nazi Party, and went on to form the National Alliance —the largest neo-Nazi group of the 1990s—and write the famous race-war fantasy novel *The Turner Diaries*.) According to Mason, Pierce said that, "The Jewish/leftist Peanut gallery that had been cheering on Manson fell silent" after he carved a swastika into his head at his trial. [7] But this was not an endorsement, and Pierce fell out with Mason after his embrace of Charlie.

Despite his rank bigotry and connections with neo-Nazis, Charlie retains an appeal to counterculturalists—and others who don't have reactionary politics but are interested in extremes—today.

ENDNOTES

[1] J. Mason, *Articles and Interviews* (2003/2018), p. 47

[2] V. Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter* (1974)

[3] H. Jacobs, ed., *Weatherman* (1970), p. 347, 481; "User Clip: Bernardine Dohrn," *CNN*, 2009

[4] N. Schreck, ed., *The Manson File* (1988), p. 141; Schreck, "Farewell to Bommi Baumann," 2016

[5] *The Manson File*, p. 141

[6] E. Frankfort, *Kathy Boudin & The Dance of Death* (1984), pp. 124, 126

[7] Mason, *Articles and Interviews*, p. 256

POLICE CAMS:For The Views

Police Body Worn Cameras are a relatively new addition to the policing arsenal.Not a direct handout from the military surplus like the urban assault vehicles, body cams snuck in from the private security sector.

Taser/Axon Enterprise was the first surveillance company to introduce the technology to the market. Police unions bulked at the idea of a wearable cop on the cop - seeing the camera as restricting the cops' ability to effectively interact with the public, protect themselves, and perform their jobs effectively. Body worn cameras sounded like oversight no one wanted.

So the marketing shifted. Prosecutor's offices were sold on the idea that the body camera offered a new source of evidence which could be used to coerce quicker guilty pleas on low level crime. The threat of video evidence would be enough incentive for most accused to accept a plea deal. A quicker plea would save the overburdened courts time while increasing guilty judgements for elected District Attorneys needing to appear tough on crime.

But even with this powerful incentive for prosecutors and courts, the police were still able to resist widespread adoption of the technology. That is until 2014.

In response to the extrajudicial execution of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, President Obama embraced body cameras including them as a feature of his 21st Century Policing Taskforce, proposing $263 million federal dollars to buy the cameras for police around the country. This was the result of a sales pitch as well. The body cam

industry targeted liberals and reformer politicians - specifically in the Obama Administration. The pitch? Their product was a tool for police transparency, oversight, and accountability which would make cops better cops and prevent bad apples from acting badly.

The police were suddenly onboard with this huge increase of federal money into their budgets. The police unions accepted it too, demanding an immediate wage increase for training, extra work, and compensation for reduction in privacy for officers. The District Attorney office spun the body camera as proof their offices were unbiased and represented all - even the "victims" of police violence.

But none of this increased accountability, protection, or transparency of police. Body cameras never offered reform. Immediately, the body camera changed police tactics. Since the camera is worn on the chest, it is easily jostled and obscured by any close contact with the cop. Police realized that this produces chaotic, unintelligible footage, which is easily manipulated and controlled.

Cops started yelling commands which are clearly recorded while the video displays a violent chaos of clothing and hands. Citizens who comply with cops can be made to appear to resist or fight on the video. According to the National Policing Institute 2020 report, "Police Body Cameras: What Have We Learned Over Ten Years of Deployment?," body cameras exonerated police in 93% of the cases of alleged misconduct. Powerful new evidence, indeed.

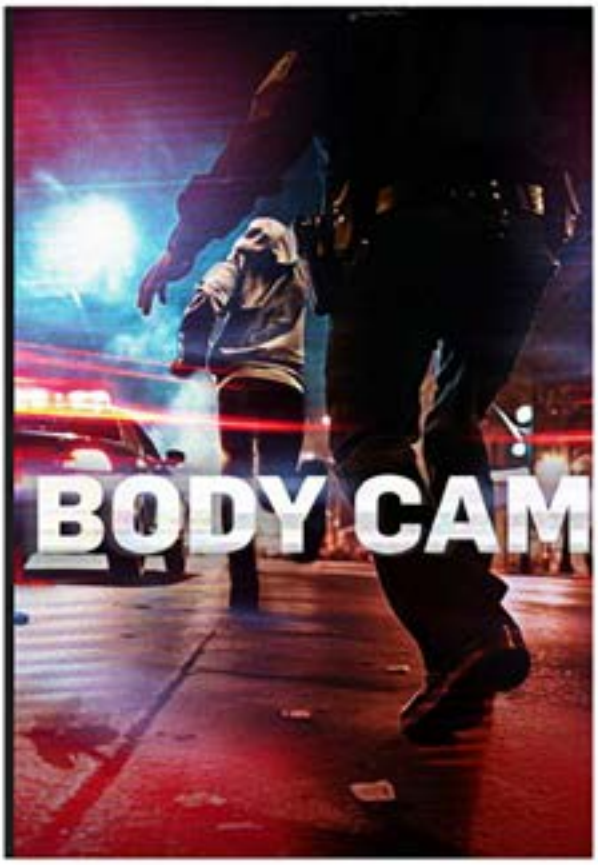
Body camera footage is manipulatable itself. Very often after a police killing of a civilian, the body worn camera footage becomes available. But the quality of that footage is low-res, blurry, and usually totally inconclusive. And investigations and juries alike give cops a wide breadth of believability, anyway, so the blurrier the footage the better for the cop's interpretation of that video.

Yet whole documentaries can be made solely from high resolution body worn camera footage when it benefits the police's point of view. Shows like *Body Cam* and *Body Cam Cops* replaced the camera crew of

COPS with the self-directed footage of law enforcement. Documentaries like *The Perfect Neighbor* and hours of youtube/instagram/Tik Tok footage of police interactions with civilians speak to the high quality of recorded video and inherent "drama" of body worn camera footage.

The cop propaganda of these shows and social media channels is undeniable. Entertainment is only a fraction of the propaganda message though. These shows are a perfect example of how the carceral system packages every new advancement of control and surveillance, spinning them into distractions and gaudy exhibitions. Downplaying the real threat body worn cameras pose to everyday citizens, by highlighting the circus the body worn cameras record. All the easier, then, to package these surveillance tools as "reforms," which allow us to feel a renewed safety and assurance when interacting with the cops- especially after video footage of cop misconduct or murder of a civilian surfaces from the public.

The idea that body worn cameras were a demand from the public, or worse progressive reformers, is a fiction. Body worn cameras were cynically marketed, in the wake of Ferguson, as a solution to police brutality. If there was any real positive change or accountability for cops, body worn cameras wouldn't have been accepted by them. Any real reform to the carceral system from outside is denied or perverted to work against that reform. Body cameras do not make cops act differently, do not protect us from police abuse, and almost always exonerate police misconduct. If body cameras really made the cops change, no cop would be wearing one today.



INTEGRITY

INTEGRITY is not a new name to anyone within the Cleveland Straight-edge scene. In fact, INTEGRITY seems to be the foremost Cleveland Straight Edge band. INTEGRITY is made up of DIE HARD's old singer as well as DIE HARD's drummer and bass player (who plays guitar in INTEGRITY). And rounding out the line-up the bass player from CONFRONT now free to pursue this band full time since they called it quits. Needless to say this group of seasoned musicians cranks out some of the hardest and most powerful Straight Edge hardcore EVER!

The band's songs lyrically deal with vegetarianism and the needless slaughter of animals, as well as sticking with any commitment you make for your entire life. Musically the band has tried to achieve a higher level of hardcore, trying to break free of all generalities that is so common in other Straight Edge bands. INTEGRITY has not jumped on any bandwagon and their musical commitment shows their dedication to the movement.

INTEGRITY's influences include such greats as Judge, Cro-Mags, Underdog, Straight Ahead, Side By Side, Project X, Gorilla Biscuits, Negative Approach, Suicidal Tendencies.

INTEGRITY has fused all these bands into a potent and effective new and fresh breed of straight Edge music.

INTEGRITY is the cutting edge and the future of straight edge!

The band is

CHUBBIE FRESH - *DRUMS*
TOM FRONT - *BASS*
the A-DOUBLE - *GUITAR*
JOHN INTEG - *VOICE*

Biography
by John Piche'
of
No Exit
zine

RINGING IT BACK FOR CLEVELAND STRAIGHT-EDGE

NEIGHBOR
FIGHTING
ZINE